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ABSTRACT

The oral testimony presented in this document was designed to supplement materials, strategies, and recommendations contained in "Guidelines for the Development of a Program in Puerto Rican and Cuban Ethnic Heritage Studies at the Post-Secondary Level" (Curry College, 1976). Part 1, "The Hispanic Media," consists of interviews with various Hispanic Media representatives. Part 2, "Hispanic Agencies," includes an interview with the Executive Director of the Hispanic Office of Planning and Evaluation, and transcripts of round table discussions of two Hispanic community groups. Part 3, "Hispanic Access to Higher Education," consists of interviews with Hispanic students from Chamberlayne College and Howard School of Medicine. Part 4, "Housing and the Spanish Speaking Community," includes interviews with Hispanic community leaders and with a Puerto Rican family living in Boston. Part 5 deals with "Social and Political Issues in the Hispanic Community," and includes an interview with the Massachusetts Secretary of State, a round table discussion of the changing role of Hispanic women, oral testimony on Caribbean folk religions, and interviews with three Hispanic men on the subject of fatherhood. (MK)

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ORAL TESTIMONY FROM THE HISPANIC COMMUNITY OF GREATER BOSTON

Robert J. Forbes, Editor

Programa para el Desarrollo
de un Currículo Universitario en
Estudios Etnicos Puertorriqueños y Cubanos

Curry College

1976

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Preface

The oral testimony presented in this document was collected, translated and edited to supplement materials, strategies and recommendations contained in Guidelines for the Development of a Program in Puerto Rican and Cuban Ethnic Heritage Studies at the Post-Secondary Level (Curry College, 1976). The testimony was gathered and processed during the period of July, 1975 through July, 1976 with the assistance of funds made available through an HEW Title IX grant for curriculum development in the area of ethnic heritage studies.

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PART I. The Hispanic Media

Interview with Awilda Artau

Interviewer: Could you give the history of the Latino Media Organization?

Artau: The organization was founded by a group of hispanic individuals from the Boston area who were interested in what was being done within the communications media for the hispanic community in Boston. One of the objectives of the group was to see that more Spanish programs were aired. Toward this end, the Latin Media Organization compiled a list of suggestions, which stated what they believed to be the needs and interests of the Spanish-speaking community in terms of television programming, and presented it to the appropriate people at Channel 5, a local Boston television station. Included in the list was the suggestion that Spanish programming should be developed and made specifically by hispanics. The reason for this suggestion was that, several weeks prior to the formation of the Latino Media Organization, the producer of Channel 5's "Third World," Carl Nurse, had contacted certain individuals in the hispanic community to inform them that he intended to submit a proposal to his station to do a series of shows about Boston's hispanic community. The Latino Media Organization felt that if there was to be a show about hispanics that it should be made by people who were familiar with the language and culture of the group to whom they were addressing themselves. The Latino Media Organization felt that it would be a mistake to have a Black American doing a program in which he was only casually familiar with the subject which he was dealing with.

: Were any of your suggestions followed?

A: After a week of negotiations with Channel 5 it was decided that not only would we be able to develop and air a Spanish program but that, in addition, we would also broadcast a morning news program. The Spanish programming would benefit not only the Spanish-speaking community, but would be helpful to Channel 5 when the station had to apply for renewal of their operating license.

: When did the negotiations take place?

A: In February, 1963.

: Who was involved in the negotiations?

A: I was involved. Also several others of whom Luis Aponte was one.

: How did Luis Aponte become interested in your organization?

A: At that time he was the director of HOPE. One day he remembered being contacted by Carl Nurse who told him of his plan involving the hispanic community. During the course of the conversation Luis had discovered that Mr. Nurse, as part of his project for Channel 5, was supposed to be working with the hispanic community. However, Mr. Nurse hadn't been working with the community at all. He had been spending funds that were expressly designed for the hispanic community and used them instead to develop shows about Black Americans. Luis, and consequently the rest of us, had felt that programs about the hispanic community and programs about the black community should be distinguished. We didn't feel that we should necessarily be in the same category competing with each other for funding. It was because of this series of events that Luis Aponte decided to become involved in the negotiations between Channel 5 and the Latino Media Organization.

: As part of the agreement with Channel 5 didn't the Latino Media Organization consent to provide the station with a list of hispanic individuals who were qualified to work in the television media? Also, how did your organization compile the list?

A: Yes. We agreed to provide Channel 5 with a list of hispanic individuals who were capable of working in some aspect of television, whether it be production, direction, or hosting a particular show. We looked in the various schools of communications in the local Boston area to find students who could help with the programming. Also, we knew personally of other individuals who could work in television. Through these means we compiled the list which was then sent to Channel 5.

: Has the membership of the Latino Media Organization increased since its inception in 1962?

A: The Organization has grown tremendously in membership since its beginning. The initial Latino Media Organization originally was formed, as I said, of a very small group of individuals from the Boston area who wanted to do something positive for the hispanic community through the communications media. Before the Latino Media Organization began its negotiations with Channel 5, they wanted to be certain that they had the support of the community. A meeting, intended for all those in the hispanic community interested in what we were doing, was called. Much to the Organization's surprise, the meeting was attended by sixty people from the various towns in Massachusetts that had a high concentration of hispanic residents. The people who attended the meeting were mainly individuals already involved in some aspect of the communications media and its relationship to the hispanic community. Among those who attended were Billy Zayas, now the host of Nosotros Theater; Tony Molinas, a disc jockey on a Spanish radio station; Sofia Rodriguez, formerly the host of La Caravana Hispana; Tomás Rivera, producer of several video-taped documentaries intended for the Spanish-speaking community, and Lou Garden, director of Cinta Borriqua.

: When did the meeting occur?

A: The meeting took place near the end of April, 1962. The results of the meeting were very positive. The people who had attended the meeting had been individually involved in the communications media; however, none of them had ever worked together as a group. As a result of our meeting these individuals had decided that their work in the media would be more productive if they would band together and work collectively as a group. What had formerly been called the Latino Media Organization would now be known as the Massachusetts Latino Media Organization. The Organization now had members from most of the communities in Massachusetts which had a high concentration of hispanic residents. Among the cities represented were Springfield, Amherst, Boston, Cambridge, Milton, Leominster and Woburn.

: What services do you provide for your members?

A: Throughout the year we have a series of regular monthly meetings in which our members are kept informed of the current events of the Organization.

We also have a job bank in which we list, weekly, any available jobs within the communications media that might be of interest to a Spanish-speaking person. However, we're experiencing a problem in this area. The majority of jobs that are available are either clerical or secretarial positions. Most of the members are seeking mainly professional positions.

The Massachusetts Latino Media Organization also sponsors workshops in which our members can participate. The purpose of many of the workshops is to inform the members of the different services or agencies which are available to them. The workshops are held in different areas throughout Massachusetts in order that they are easily accessible to all our members.

Another important aspect of our organization is to keep our members informed of the proceedings of the National Latino Media Coalition, of which we are affiliated. The aim of the National Coalition is to see that a positive, unstereotyped image of the hispanic individual in the communications media is portrayed. In addition, the Coalition works in conjunction with the FCC (Federal Communications Commission) to insure the hiring of hispanics. An indication of the effect which the National Coalition has had on the television media was evidenced this past year. The National Coalition wanted to bring about a change in the way in which television stations applied for license renewal. The standard practice had been that a station had to apply to renew its license every five years. The National Latino Media Coalition felt that each station should apply every three years instead of the normal five years. The reason for the change was that the National Coalition felt that license renewal was one of the few instruments which could be used in order to determine whether the individual stations were complying with the Public Service Broadcasting regulations and that they were also employing fair hiring practices with regards to minority groups.

: How does the Latino Media Organization encourage its members to complain to a television or radio station if they feel an incorrect statement or an unfair image of the hispanic community has been portrayed?

A: We feel that the most effective way to register any complaint we may have of a particular radio or television station is in written form. We urge our members to write letters to the appropriate station managers if they have heard something with which they disagree. For example, I was faced with a situation recently where I had heard a commentary made by a well-known newsman which I thought was ill-spoken. The commentary was by Eric Severeid entitled "How the U. S. has Three Problems in Latin America." Supposedly one problem was Cuba, another Puerto Rico, and the third was the Panama Canal. The subject was one which obviously had not been well researched because some of the statements he made were incorrect. I felt that the commentary had been unfair to the hispanic residents of the United States and in order to try and rectify the damage which I felt had been done, I wrote a letter to the manager of the station where I had heard the commentary. In my letter I asked that I be given equal rebuttal time in which I could counter the statements made in the original commentary. The Latino Media Organization feels that the only way to correct a stereotyped, negative or shortsighted portrayal of an hispanic person is through active involvement. We cannot afford to sit passively by and let these false images be created.

: What is the relationship between the Latino Media Organization and the hispanic newspapers, radio stations or any other media of communication which is run by an hispanic?

A: In general, we have a good relationship with the various hispanic-run communications media. However, we have had a problem with the publisher of El Mundo, a local Spanish newspaper. The paper is controlled by a Cuban gentleman who uses the newspaper to propound his individual political views. He uses the paper as a convenient vehicle in which he can spread his anti-Castro, anti-Cuba propaganda. Even though this man's intentions have been good, we, at the Latino Media Organization, feel that he, as a publisher of what could be an important newspaper for the hispanic community, should widen his perspectives to include varying or opposing viewpoints. As it stands, the newspaper isn't beneficial to the community because it only services a minority viewpoint.

: Has anything been done to try and remedy the situation?

A: We have had several conversations with the publisher of the paper in order to let him know that we object to the way he's conducting it. Newspapers are an important media because of its written form. Whatever is printed remains. The written word can be read over and over, unlike the spoken word of television where something is said once and not repeated. People have contacted our organization to complain about the contents of the paper and have asked if something can be done to change the focus of the paper.

We feel that part of the problem is that there aren't any reporters to cover the news-worthy events of the hispanic community. The only other news articles he prints in addition to his political articles are about who's been baptized recently, who's celebrated their birthday recently, or who's been married recently.

In our investigation of the paper we have discovered that certain letters which have appeared in the "Letters to the Editor" column about political issues were written by imaginary people! What is so distressing about this situation is that there's no one we can complain to. There's a National Association of Newspapers and Publishers we could write to, but El Mundo doesn't belong. El Mundo is a private enterprise and is not obliged to join the Association. Therefore, the publisher of El Mundo has no superior who he must ultimately account to.

: Are there any other solutions to this problem?

A: Our organization has considered forming our own newspaper where we can reflect all the varying viewpoints of the community. It would be a paper for and about the hispanic community in Boston. Ideally, the paper would be a community-run operation whereby the whole community could become involved. But there would be problems. In order to run a newspaper you must have capital. Right now we don't.

: Do you feel that within the hispanic community there is a voluntary segregation of the various groups, such as the Puerto Ricans and the Cubans? Is there any interaction between the two groups?

A: Among the young generation there is indeed an interaction between Puerto Rican and Cuban youths. As a matter of fact, there is a club in Boston, the Centro Cultural Latino, which is an example of the unity of the different groups within the hispanic community. Participating in the Centro's activities are Puerto Ricans, Venezuelans, Colombians, and anyone else who is interested in what the Centro has to offer. There are many people in the community who are very talented. For example, we have many aspiring writers, actors, dancers and artists who need a means for expressing their talent. The Centro provides the opportunity to these budding artists and at the same time becomes a meeting ground for all the different hispanic ethnic groups.

The Centro was originally organized by a group of Puerto Ricans who wanted the place to be a haven for the Puerto Ricans in the community. They wanted to call the place, Centro Cultural Puertorriqueño. But several of us got together and decided that it would not be in the best interest of the community if the Centro were restricted to Puerto Ricans. So we decided to open the Center for all those in the community who wanted to take advantage of our resources. Our aim wasn't to divide the community into separate ethnic groups, but it was to bring all of us together.

: What have been the greatest successes or the biggest failures of the Latino Media Organization?

A: I think one of the most unfortunate events so far has been the inability of the Organization to become incorporated. We haven't been able to consolidate our strength. I think this is mainly because those of us who work here do it on a volunteer basis. In addition to our work with the Organization, most of us also have full-time jobs. The problem that this causes is that there is no director who can organize the affairs of the group or who can orchestrate new programs or who can attempt to seek government grants or new means of funding the Organization.

As part of our educating process, the Massachusetts Latino Media Group would like to be able to go into the different communities and the various agencies around town to conduct seminars, call press conferences, send out a press communiqué to inform people of what our organization is doing. But in order to do all of this we must have a director who can organize and set up these meetings.

As for the biggest successes our organization has enjoyed, I would say that the development and airing of the Spanish shows with Channel 5, which we had worked so hard to achieve, was a big success. Also, another success of our organization has been the contract we received with Boston 200. This contract essentially gives us the opportunity to work in conjunction with the Centro Cultural Hispano to prepare a series of events which will be part of the Festival Bostonian which will be celebrated in December 1975. At the festival will be the various fundraisers and the different area corporations. We will be given the opportunity to show them visually the reasons for the need of an organization such as ours. Perhaps, as a result of our show some of the corporations will make pledges to contribute money to our organization.

Another major achievement of our organization has been the consolidation of all the different communities throughout Massachusetts that have a high concentration of hispanic residents, such as Lowell, Lawrence, Leominster and many more, to form one united organization.

: What kind of exposure does the hispanic community receive in the local Boston papers like the Globe, Herald-American and other non-Spanish newspapers?

A: Most of the coverage the Spanish community receives is negative. Among the stories which are covered are murders, assaults, and riots.

: Is there anyone on the staff of any of the non-Spanish papers who covers the positive events in the hispanic community?

A: There is one staff reporter who takes a personal interest in the events of the hispanic community. Her name is Ann Kirsheimer. Even though her paper hasn't assigned her to cover the hispanic community, she has dedicated her own time to find out what is happening in the community. She has asked me to keep her advised of any newsworthy events within the community because she knows that I have special contacts within the community. I would say that she is the only non-Spanish reporter who has shown the hispanic community in a positive light.

: What is the relationship between the Latino Media Organization and newspapers or radio stations that don't have any hispanics on their staff?

A: At this point just about any non-Spanish newspaper or radio station will accept work done by people within the Spanish community only on a free basis. In these difficult economic times, it is unrealistic to expect someone to work without receiving a salary. There are many professionals in the community who are capable of writing articles or doing radio shows. However, they have already devoted their free time in organizations such as ours which benefit the community directly. The only way for anyone to write articles or whatever is to guarantee them a contract.

For example, Sofía Rodriguez--who has graduated from Simmons College with a major in journalism and is, at this time, working with María Los Angeles Dowd in the production of Eco, a Spanish show on Channel 7--is someone who is qualified to write newspaper articles in English and in Spanish. But she has found that she can't obtain employment in that area. Problems such as this, I feel, will eventually be brought out into the open and will develop into a struggle which we must, in the hispanic community, bring about. But this problem is not only limited to the established newspapers, but it is also a problem with the underground newspapers who are supposedly looking for alternative approaches to newscasting.

I feel that in order to bring this issue to the fore we ultimately should establish a public relations office in order to explore and try to remedy such unfortunate situations as Sofia's. In terms of television programming, perhaps the installation of cable television will be the answer to the hispanic community. We could organize a group who would be able to get together enough money to buy a franchise on cable t.v. This would allow us to broadcast entirely in Spanish all day, which would be a healthy alternative for the Spanish-speaking community.

: What kind of programming would you develop for Spanish cable television?

A: It would be great if a comedy show could be developed. Generally hispanics have a fine sense of humor and would appreciate comedy shows.

I feel that certainly a lot more time could be dedicated to providing more relevant information to the community. For instance, more service type information programs could be done. English stations broadcast regular traffic reports during the rush hours and keep people informed of the weather for that particular day. These kinds of reports would also be very helpful to the Spanish-speaking community. There are times when I walk out of the house in the morning and I don't know whether it's going to rain, be sunny, or whatever.

: Wouldn't it be a lot more beneficial to the community if the two hours of Nosotros Theater which are devoted to showing a movie were used to interview more people from the community, the hispanic agencies , or dealt with topics which were relevant to the Spanish speaking?

A: It certainly would be better for the community if the format of Nosotros Theater were changed. But, realistically, the show has a very small budget. And it's difficult to operate an efficient show without a big budget.

: Who selects the particular movies which are shown on Nosotros Theater?

A: Billy has no control over which movie is shown each week. His television station has a contract with a Miami/New York-based organization, Caballero Media. They dispatch mostly second-rate movies to stations with whom they have contracts. The movies come complete with commercials in Spanish. Because Billy didn't have a large budget to work with, he accepted the company's deal.

: In my conversations with various people from the community I have heard criticism of Bill Zayas' Spanish. Would you like to comment?

: The issue of his language is a very interesting one. I, myself, have taken an unofficial survey in order to determine people's reaction to his less-than-native ability to speak Spanish. I found that the people who had recently immigrated to Boston from Puerto Rico or Latin America were bothered by his inability to speak Spanish well. On the other hand, there are people who feel that the way he speaks Spanish is symbolic of the second generation who, although they speak Spanish at home, were educated in English. One woman told me that Billy's Spanish didn't bother her because he sounded like her son sounds when he tries to speak Spanish. Billy represents the son of doña Pancha or of doña Petra or of doña Julia. He has tried to maintain his parents' language even though he speaks English perfectly well.

: Does he feel nervous when he speaks Spanish?

A: No. He feels very comfortable speaking Spanish. He's aware that he doesn't speak fluently. But Billy has the ability to speak "visually," something like "non-verbal communication." And, in terms of his show, he does an excellent job. He has interesting guests and is a good interviewer.

Interview with William Zayas Sanjurjo,
host of Nosotros Theater, 1976.

Interviewer: Who was the first person to have a Spanish show in Boston?

Zayas: Armando Rivera became the first hispanic personality in the Boston area to have a show in Spanish. The program was aired on Channel 38 and was called Ronda Musical.

: How did you get your start in television?

Z: I had been at a meeting organized by Los Padres in which the topic of closing the only bilingual school in the Roxbury-North Dorchester area had been discussed. It was an important issue which, I felt, deserved publicity. I had seen a newsperson from Channel 7 at the meeting and asked him who was going to cover the story. He said that he didn't have any reporters who could speak Spanish well enough to be able to do the story. Since I had been familiar with the hispanic community and knew the language, I volunteered my services as an interviewer and translator for a Channel 7 reporter to be able to cover the story. That's how I made my entry into the television industry. I had had no formal training in television up until that point. My area of study was anthropology and sociology and, at the time of the meeting, I had been working on my Ph.D. in Educational Administration at Harvard. The result of my teaming with the reporter of Channel 7 was a thirty-minute documentary for which I received the credit of co-producer.

After I finished the documentary I was asked by the state department to develop a program for hispanic children to be aired on the "21-inch Classroom." I agreed to take on the project which I not only wrote but also produced. Because of the successful completion of this project, I was then asked by the manager of the Westinghouse Company to join the staff of their news department. I was honored to have been considered for the post but at the same time I had the suspicion that I was asked to join the staff because of my ethnic background. In order to keep in good standing with the FCC a station must demonstrate that they employ minorities. Being an hispanic, I satisfied the station's needs and broke up the all-white composition of the staff. It was a difficult situation for me to be placed in. I'll never know if they wanted me for my talent as a writer-producer or for my Puerto Rican heritage.

: Do you feel that, in the future, programs where Spanish is now exclusively spoken will eventually attempt to do portions in English?

Z: I feel that if the Spanish programs begin to use English that they will have lost the attention of their Spanish-speaking audience.

: Can you conjecture on who your projected audience is?

Z: If you're speaking about my show, I'd have to say that I really don't know "who" my audience is, but I do know that if my viewers are willing to get out of bed and put on the television at the inconvenient hour at which my show is aired, they must be people who cannot enjoy or understand the regular programming in English.

: Do you think that the need for Spanish programming is so great that people are willing to put up with the inconvenience of the time of your show?

Z: The people are making a sacrifice to watch my show--not only because they have to get up early, but you must remember that my show is aired during the church-going hours and if they want to see my show they have to either go to church earlier or later than usual. But I feel the reward is just.

: How are guests for your show chosen?

Z: Usually a particular personality is suggested to me by a friend or others in the communications media. I then contact the individual and ask him to audition. If I think he will be an asset to the show, I will ask him to be my guest.

: Who has the responsibility to make final decisions?

Z: I have the authority to make every decision in every aspect of my show.

: Have you had any criticism of your show?

Z: I was criticized and called on at my home for doing a show about Fidel Castro which was shown the week of Generalisimo Franco's death. On the show I contrasted Franco's political views with Castro's. People didn't like what they thought was my favoring of Castro's ideology. My philosophy for the show is that I should try and express all points of view and not cradle any one-sided prejudice. My guests have been from many types of religious, political, and class backgrounds. My guests have included Catholics, Pentecostals, Spiritualists and Jews. I personally feel that if people are going to limit themselves to what they already know, then learning has come to an end. People learn by exposing themselves to new and different points of view.

Many people have asked me what I do in my spare time. Frankly, all I do is try and keep abreast of what is happening in the world around me. I read probably four or five newspapers and two or three magazines daily to find out. I make a point of travelling to at least two cities outside the Boston area, visiting barber shops, beauty salons, bars and even grocery stores, to be able to talk and listen to some of the different kinds of people that make up the community.

The public transportation system in Massachusetts is always filled with people, so I opt to take a train or a bus rather than isolate myself in a car. It's also important to me to go into the hispanic community to find out what's going on and also to find out what the public's opinion is of me and my show.

: How does your viewing public regard you?

Z: There are two basic criticisms of me. The first is that I'm a Communist, and the second is that I don't speak Spanish well. On the other hand, there are people who believe that I've been an important factor in the development of the hispanic community for the past three or four years. These three opinions about me are wrong. In the first place, I've never made public my personal political beliefs. I simply have guests on the show to express their particular viewpoints and, hopefully, they will attract other opposing points of view.

As far as the language issue is concerned, I wouldn't be telling the truth if I said the criticism didn't bother me. It bothers me because, to a certain extent, it is something which is beyond my control. My vocabulary and speaking ability have improved over the years, but many times I feel as if I should leave the scene to someone who can communicate better with the Spanish-speaking public. However, I feel justified in my position because I have something to say to the community which I feel is important and feel I should continue with my mission.

: Do you feel that one of the reasons for the successfulness of your show has been that your audience has identified with your imperfect use of the Spanish language because many of them are a product of the same circumstances in which you were brought up, namely, that your formal educational training was in English and your only opportunity to speak Spanish was at home with relatives?

Z: I personally doubt that the language factor has been a contributing force in the successfulness of my show. I consider myself a direct mode of communication and feel that this is one of the reasons for the success of my show.

: Do you find that the hispanic programs on the air currently are at a disadvantage in comparison to other programs? Is there discrimination in favor of or against the shows?

Z: Certainly the hispanic programs are at a disadvantage but the reasons are justified in economic terms. Sponsors have a product to sell and thus are geared toward a certain market. They want their commercials to be aired on the shows which will be profitable to them. The hispanic community doesn't seem to react to commercialization. They're not a good selling market. So hispanic shows are at a disadvantage economically.

: Do you think that the hispanic community would profit from a market based on propaganda?

Z: Propaganda's necessary. For example, I want to be able to conduct the interviews on my show without any commercial interruption. In order to do that, I'm forced to sell the other part of my show so that I raise enough capital.

: Do you feel that the movies which you show every week are well-received by your audience?

Z: I don't like the movies and I think the majority of the public doesn't like them. Right now I'm doing my best to replace them with a series of better, more relevant films.

: How do you perceive the influence of your program?

Z: I'd like to believe that I help people develop a consciousness not only of the existing problems but of possible solutions.

: What is your relationship with the other local hispanic programs? Is it one of collaboration, cooperation, competition, mistrust?

Z: There's some jealousy but not competition.

: Why jealousy?

Z: Because of the amount of money I have to do my show. The budget of the other hispanic shows is not as large as mine.

: If you could change any aspect of your program, what would you change?

Z: I'd have cameras all over the hispanic community so that I could film important events. In addition, I'd like to have correspondents in New York City, Mexico, Florida, Buenos Aires, and in Santiago who could at least communicate the news from those particular locales via satellite in a roundtable form. My dream is to establish a televised information chain in Spanish.

: Do you feel there is an intellectual class developing in the hispanic community?

Z: As a community, no. As individuals, yes.

: In your estimation, what is the biggest problem besieging the hispanic community?

Z: Self-hatred. Not only is it dangerous when a community begins to arrange its programs in a defensive begrudging style, but it is even more dangerous when a community begins to condemn itself.

: What is the influence of the church in the hispanic community?

Z: Very little as far as community leadership is concerned. But its influence is tremendous as far as family unity and morality are concerned.

: Does the hispanic community have leaders?

Z: I'm perhaps one of the best known hispanics in Massachusetts, yet I don't think I can be called a leader. I think the leadership that's emerging consists of Boston-born hispanics.

: Are the various hispanic agencies being accepted by the community and by other agencies?

Z: I honestly think they are being accepted. The agencies are effective only as long as they aren't confused or mistaken for utopia.

Interview with

Maria Los Ángeles Dowd, 1976

Interviewer: What do you feel should be done by a communications media, trying to defend the rights and interests of the hispanic community in Massachusetts, to effectively approach their goals?

Dowd: I think that an organization, such as the Latino Media Group, should present a written proposal stating the needs of the hispanic community to the different branches of the communications media. One proposal should be directed expressly for television, another should be aimed at radio, and a third should be directed to the newspapers. We realized that not much progress had been accomplished by meeting and talking to the various people in the communications media. However, with a specific proposal outlining what we feel is lacking in television programming, radio broadcasts, and the news for the hispanic community we will begin to achieve our goals. We have proposed, for example, that there should be more Spanish programming to accommodate the needs and interests of the hispanic community. But we should also recognize that this is not enough. More hispanic technicians, cameramen and directors should be trained in order to ensure quality Spanish programming. I'm not suggesting that the entire staff of a Spanish program necessarily be Spanish speaking, but it would improve the quality of at least the visual portion of the shows if several cameramen were Spanish speaking. As it stands now the host and the guests of a Spanish program are usually the only people who speak Spanish, while all the technicians speak only English. As a result, many needless problems have arisen over the lack of communication. Many of my own shows, which could have turned out well, were marred by the failure of a cameraman to understand who and where to film.

: The communication gap, then, is a serious problem in making a Spanish show?

D: It's always a problem when the cameramen can't speak the language which is being spoken on the stage. He can't understand when a guest is about to finish answering a question and who will speak next.

: Do you feel that in the future the level of organization in the Latino Media Group will improve? In other words, do you think the organization will reach the point at which analytical studies of a given situation can be made which can generate a specific method of approach to solving the problems with which the hispanic community are faced?

D: I think right now the problem which the Latino Media Group is experiencing is the problem of being a young organization. They're in the midst of learning how certain institutions operate and how to effectively approach their objectives. But I think the group has a lot of potential. Up to this point, the organization has had to dispel its incorrect image of troublemakers. I feel that eventually they will earn the respect and even the aid of members of the community. After the organization matures, it will be able to analyze the needs of the community and devise a practical plan which will point toward a better future for the hispanic community.

: How can we be assured that organizations such as the Latino Media Group represent the true interests of the community? Also, how can they recruit the community to actively participate in their cause?

D: First, I think the organization should clearly state what they believe to be the needs and interests of the community. They should go into the community and speak directly to the people. I'm not saying that they should speak with the supposed leaders of the community, but they should speak to as many different people in the community as possible. The people in the community can be asked specifically what their interests are. They can be asked what they would like to see on television or what they think is wrong with the programming as it stands, etc. After compiling the information gathered from the people in the community, the Latino Media Group should then compare notes. They should look for any disparities in what they had originally stated as the needs and the interests of the hispanic community and what they had actually discovered were the needs and the interests of the community. If there are any points of difference, a further examination should be made. The end result would assure that the Latino Media Group would represent adequately the true interests of the community.

: Is it true that one of the difficulties which the Latino Media Group is faced with is the lack of a financial budget under which they can function properly?

D: Yes, it's true that they don't have any solid budget and I certainly give them a lot of credit for what they have been able to do so far. The organization mainly consists of volunteers. We are, what I call, a charity organization. By this I mean, we aren't self-supporting. We are incapable of sustaining the organization by our volunteer efforts alone. Many of us are tired of volunteering our services for forty thousand different problems. There are so many problems to be solved yet so few people or money to adequately solve them.

: How did your television show originate?

D: The show was originally called La Caravana Hispana.

: Who directed the show?

D: An American. All the directors here are American.

: How did your show Eco result from La Caravana Hispana?

D: For several years I worked on a project to develop a program which centered around issues of concern to the Spanish-speaking community in Massachusetts. When the project was completed, I showed it to the different television stations with the hope that one of them would find the idea interesting and attempt to put it on the air. Originally it wasn't my intention to host the program because at that time I had been involved in the publicity aspect of television where I was making mainly public-service announcements. But one day Sonia, who hosted La Caravana Hispana, announced she would be leaving the show. That meant that her position would be offered to another hispanic. The station officials decided to continue broadcasting a Spanish show only after I and several others demanded that it be continued. The show would be like La Caravana--shown every other Sunday. This, in the future, would present a problem because the irregularity of timing confused the audience. It was very easy for people to forget exactly which Sunday the program was on. After all the formalities of time and whatnot had been worked out, I was invited for an interview.

: Did you solicit the interview?

D: Yes, I asked for the interview because I thought the job would be a challenge. At the interview I had discussed what I thought the format of the show should be. I thought the show should be run similar to Mass. Reaction where a panel of experts or newspeople were invited to discuss and answer questions from the audience on a particular subject. I felt that audience participation would be integral to the success of the show. People from the community would be invited to air their grievances, comment on a particular situation, or just speak about what was on their mind. I wanted the show to be an "echo" of what was happening in the hispanic community. I also felt that the show should be bilingual, or that both Spanish and English should be spoken. Hispanics aren't the only ones who watch Spanish programming. Part of our audience are those who speak English and depend on us to let them know what is happening in the hispanic community. Having a portion of my audience being Anglo gives me the opportunity to break down the stereotype of the hispanic. I can show that we have our own unique culture and that we're capable of making significant contributions to American society. Contrarily, the show could be used to expose to the hispanic community the American culture.

: Do you think that Spanish programming will improve in the future?

D: Yes. In my opinion, the idea of Spanish programming is very good. It's refreshing to be able to turn on the t.v. and hear programs in your own language, especially when you're surrounded by nothing but programs in English. I hope the quality of Spanish programming improves because I'd like to see it become an integral part of television programming in general. One of our goals is to see hispanic reporters on the prime-time newscasts doing newstories in English.

: Who makes the final decisions about the contents of your show?

D: I have sole control over the contents of my show. The only time I hear from the station manager is about financial matters.

: How do you measure the success or failure of your show in terms of audience reaction? Do you receive letters from your viewers commenting on your show?

D: One of the areas where I've experienced problems is in not being able to accurately judge the reaction to my program. Not many people in the community write to me to tell me how they feel about my show. I don't know whether people like or dislike my show.

: Are your programs "live"?

D: No, they're taped. However, if the decision were mine, I'd rather do the shows live.

: Are you conscious of speaking to a particular social or economic group in the hispanic community?

D: I'm speaking to the hispanic community as a whole. The community is made up of people from all kinds of social and economic classes and I wouldn't want to insult or ignore any group by directing my attention to one particular segment of my audience.

: How do you feel the hispanic community is treated by the non-hispanic media?

D: A lot of the shows I have seen about hispanics have been negative. For example, I turned on the television the other day and heard a business-type looking man, who was well-dressed, discussing the problem of rats in the city. He was trying to tell people how this problem could be solved. But, in my opinion, the program didn't present this issue in a way which would reach the people who were having problems with rats.

I'm sure the man who was discussing the problem hadn't actually experienced having rats infest his home. He appeared to be removed from the reality of the situation he was talking about. I don't think people in the community respond to this type of problem-solving. If they had heard the problem discussed by someone from the community who actually had a problem with rats and worked effectively to get rid of them, then she should be on the air. I think the hispanic community need to hear their problems discussed by people that they can identify with. Because I've seen the negative effect of so many issues dealing with the hispanic community discussed by "experts," on my show I like to have people from the community discuss first-hand their problems.

: Are you responsible for finding a commercial sponsor for your show?

D: Yes, but only to a certain extent. It's mainly the job of the publicity department. But my program isn't intended to make money for the television station because it's a public service broadcast. There are essentially two kinds of programs. There are the "self-supporting" programs and what I call the "charity" programs. My show is a charity program and I'm here because the station has to air a certain amount of public service shows in order to comply with FCC standards. Shows like The Bob Hilton Show are self-supporting programs because they can easily find commercial sponsors.

The hispanic people who work in the television industry are trying to change the notion that Spanish programming should be under the heading of public service broadcasts. We would like to be a part of the regular programming. We feel that it's time for the hispanic individual in television to be heard for his or her individual abilities to work within the media. We don't want to be handed jobs just because we are hispanic. This situation is unfair to the hispanic personality because, in order to prove his worth, he or she is working extra hours. But, on the other hand, an Anglo in the same position puts in his or her required hours and leaves. I'm at the studio at 5:00 in the morning supposedly until 2:00 in the afternoon. I rarely work those hours though. I remain at the studio at least until 8:00 each night. Once when I was ill I had to drag myself out of bed and come to the studio to finish my work. I have to spend all the extra hours and the hours when I'm sick at work because without me there would be no show. There is no one else who can back me up when I can't do my show myself. This situation is radically different for the American people in television because if they become ill and can't make it to work, they know there will inevitably be someone at the studio to back them up.

: Why did you feel there was a need for a Spanish newscast?

D: I wanted to change the image of the Spanish-speaking people as portrayed in the news media. When I first came to the United States I had noticed that the teletypes carried news-stories in English only and of interest only to an English-speaking audience. The only news I heard which would be of interest to the Spanish-speaking community were of negative events happening in Latin America. I would read reports of hurricanes sweeping across the countryside, devastating homes and property, or I'd read about the barbaric group of savages planning a coup to overthrow a government. When a newsreport came in about President Perón, we would be given the mistaken image that she and her cabinet could do nothing but disagree with eachother. All the news from Latin America left the false impression that nothing good ever happened there. I felt that this negative image of hispanics had to be changed, and reporting news about daily events in Latin America and about the hispanic community in the United States was the best vehicle to accomplish that task.

: What are the sources for your news-stories?

D: There are very few sources which I can consult. I read El Diario which is a paper devoted to the issues and concerns of the Spanish speaking in America and published in New York.

: Do you consult the local Boston newspapers for news-stories?

D: I don't like to use papers such as The Boston Globe or Herald American because, like the television news, many of the articles about the hispanic community are negative. For example, a local newspaper ran a story with the headline, "Puerto Rican killed in Springfield." The article portrayed the Puerto Rican community in an unfavorable light, depicting them as "animals" who were running rampant through the streets inciting riots. After the original article several more articles appeared written in the same vein. Finally, a police investigation into the matter concluded that the police had been trigger-happy in their attempt to break up the congregation of people which had gathered after the murder. The newspapers were forced into reporting the results of the investigation. Even though it was evident that the newspapers had distorted the incident and depicted an unfair image of Puerto Ricans, the damage had already been done. An impression of Puerto Rican people had been created and it would be difficult to correct that impression. As a result of stories such as that which appear in the local papers, I'm careful about what stories I'd use.

: Do people from the hispanic community inform you of what is happening so that you can broadcast it on your newsshow?

D: It would be helpful if I did get calls from the hispanic community telling me what is happening, however, no one ever calls. At times, because the hispanic community doesn't help by providing me with the news in the community, serious problems have arisen. For example, when the desegregation order of Boston schools finally had become a reality, I spent many futile days attempting to discover what impact it had on the hispanic community. I wanted to know if there were any problems with student assignments because I had read that there was a lot of confusion among other students. With the added problem of language I assumed that problems in the hispanic community would be enormous. I wanted some feedback from the community so that I could make it a topic on one of my shows and, hopefully, try to better the situation. But nobody called. After about a month of silence, I assumed there weren't any problems. Then, one day, the Comité de Padres called to invite me to a press conference. I didn't know what it would be about but I went. At the conference I found out, much to my surprise, that the community was having problems with the student assignments! I couldn't understand why I hadn't been advised. Months had already passed and I could have attempted to help with the community's problems when they first happened. I'm aware that this communication barrier could have been resolved if I had gone into the community on my own initiative to find out if there were any problems, but I'm so overloaded with work that there is not enough time in the day for me to accept another responsibility.

: Is there another alternative to seeking newsstories in the community?

D: Yes. I believe that there should be an hispanic reporter who can cover the stories in the community. Not only would a reporter be helpful in representing the community, but he would also be able to write about hispanics without stereotyping, or distorting the issues. The problem with English-speaking reporters is that they experience language problems in dealing with the community. For example, news anchorman, Ted O'Brien, had been sent by his station to cover a story in the hispanic community. It didn't bother me that I wasn't asked to cover the story, but I can't understand why he was sent when the station could have sent Steve Sheppard, who speaks Spanish fluently, to do the story. In cases such as this, an hispanic reporter would be able to cover the story in much more depth and with much more success than a newsman who doesn't speak the language.

: How did you discover that there was a newsworthy event in the community?

D: On this particular instance I received a phone call from someone in the community informing me of the plight of Mrs. Diaz. I'd have to give the community credit in this instance for taking the initiative to inform the necessary people of what was happening in the community. Bill Zayas, who had gone into the community to investigate, had continuously kept me informed of Mrs. Diaz's progress.

: Is communication among hispanic people in the media important? Do you mutually help each other?

D: I would say that communication among hispanic people in the media is integral. Bill, who walks about the hispanic community day and night, keeps me informed of actual events. He's helped me tremendously by giving me a feeling for the hispanic community and for showing me the sense of responsibility he feels toward the community. For example, he had spent the entire night at the hospital with Mrs. Diaz and later called me to tell me to check the various false reports which claimed that either she had died, had been beaten, or that she had been mistreated by the community. By giving me a true account of the story I was able to run the story, satisfied that what I was saying was not a distortion but was the truth. I certainly appreciate Bill for his help which proves that communication among people in the media is important.

: Even though there is an exchange of information among the hispanic people in the media, is there also competition?

D: I don't think there's competition among the hispanic people in the media but only because the three Spanish programs are three very different shows. Bill Zayas, for example, has much more time on his shows than I do. He is able to air a movie in Spanish. I don't have time for that. The Spanish show on Channel 5 is different just in terms of a budget. I don't know what Bill's budget is, but I know that the budget for Channel 5 is much higher than mine. There is probably more money for Channel 5 for one program than there is on my station for a whole year. How can you compete against that!

Interview with Jorge Quiroga and Guillermo Artau, Producers of *Aquí*, 1976

Interviewer: Is the Massachusetts Latino Media Group a local or national organization?

Quiroga: We are a local Massachusetts organization who are affiliated with the National Latino Media Coalition. The National Coalition is an organization composed of the various local latino media groups and not of individuals.

: How is the Massachusetts Latino Media Group funded?

Q: Our organization is made up of volunteers who provide the necessary money for envelopes, stamps and other incidentals. We also collect ten dollars from each member in order to pay for administrative costs.

: Does the Massachusetts Latino Media Group have a charter?

Q: Yes. We have a charter which clearly states the objectives of the organization and who the organization intends to serve.

: Is it a public document?

Q: Yes. Copies can be obtained by calling or writing either the Massachusetts Latino Media Group or the State department which handles incorporations.

: What are the objectives of the organization as defined by the charter?

Artau: One objective of the organization is the development of a communications media for the hispanic community. Another important goal of the organization is to assist individuals from the hispanic community to locate employment within the communications media. A third objective is to act as a "watch dog" vis-à-vis the needs of the hispanic community in terms of television programming.

: Is there any contact between the local television stations and the Massachusetts Latino Media Group?

Q: Yes. Each of the local stations are aware of our existence and call us to give us suggestions and advice.

: Are all the members of the Mass. Latino Media Group associated with the media or are there members outside the media?

Q: Most of our members are associated with the media.

: How many members are there?

Q: There are twenty-five active members.

: Do most of the members participate actively in the organization?

Q: Yes. Our members take an active role either in a formal or an informal capacity.

: Say a person was watching a Red Sox game on television and objected to the way the announcers pronounced the name of an hispanic player. What can this person do to protest?

Q: Actually there are two ways a person can register a complaint. One way is to write directly to the station. The other way is to speak to the Red Sox organization and the Massachusetts Latino Media Group, where we will register a formal complaint.

: Has this situation actually happened?

A: As of this time we haven't had any complaints about the pronunciation of the names of hispanic players.

: What is the most important aspect of the Massachusetts Latino Media Group?

Q: I would say the most important aspects of our organization are to find jobs within the communications media for the hispanic community, and also to work with the local stations to develop more Spanish programming.

: Has the Massachusetts Latino Media Group been instrumental in the creation of Latino programs?

Q: Yes. We have worked with both Channel 5 and Channel 7 where we have been able to develop new programming.

: What are the shows you've created?

Q: We've created and aired "Aquí" and also a show which used to be called "La Caravana Hispana" and what is now called "Eco." Channel 7 has also aired a daily Spanish newscast which is seen early in the morning.

: Have these programs come about as the result of negotiations between the Latino Media Organization and the various television stations?

Q: We've spoken to, negotiated with, pressured, and demanded that the stations air more Spanish programs.

: Was your organization aggressive in making the demands?

Q: We were aggressive when we had to be at the beginning of our negotiations.

: Which of the local stations was the most cooperative?

A: I think Channel Five has been the most cooperative.

: Which of the local stations has been the most resistant?

Q: For local programming, Channel Two has been the most resistant. Channel Two provides only two programs which relate either directly or indirectly to the Spanish Speaking: "Carrascolendas," which is shown twice a week, and "Villa Alegre," which is shown daily. But both of these programs are for children. The only Show Channel Two has for Spanish-speaking adults is "Realidades" which is not a locally produced program. One drawback of this program is that it is only a thirteen-week series.

: Suppose an hispanic reporter or host was having a problem with his or her show or with the station officials, would that person come to the Massachusetts Latino Media Group for help? Would the Massachusetts Latino Media Group intervene and provide help for that individual?

A: Yes. If the individual asks for the aid of the Massachusetts Latino Media Group, then we provide him or her with assistance. The Massachusetts Latino Media Group provides a forum where our members meet and casually discuss what is happening in our respective jobs, or we talk about any problems we may be experiencing and also of the possible solutions.

: What are the weaknesses of your organization?

Q: The biggest weakness is our lack of money. Without sufficient funds it's difficult to run the organization as effectively as we would like.

: How do you feel about the situation now? Are you pleased with the accomplishments of the Massachusetts Latino Media Group?

Q: Comparing the situation in Boston to other cities where there is a high population of hispanic residents, I would have to say that it is not too bad. Of course, we feel the situation should be improved more in terms of the type of programming which is aired and also in other aspects. But we feel that improvements will be made. In the future, I feel that better Spanish programming will be developed--which will be more significant to our audience.

: Are all the hispanic narrators or hosts of Spanish shows on television members of the Massachusetts Latino Media Group?

Q: Yes. All the hispanic television personalities are members of the organization with the exception of the producers and the other people on the Spanish show on Channel Thirty-Eight. Originally, the people on Channel Thirty-Eight were involved in our organization but I haven't seen them for over a year and a half.

: Do the hispanic television personalities criticize each other's shows?

A: I don't think that we've arrived at the point where we can criticize each other.

: You can't criticize each other because you all know each other and it would be difficult to criticize friends?

A: It would be like self-criticism.

: Do you think that Latino programming is insecure because it is relatively new and that any criticism would be more destructive than constructive?

Q: We criticize each other informally.

A: Yes, we criticize each other in a relaxed manner. We could be sitting down having a beer and I'd say, "Gee, I liked your show" or "Gee, I really didn't like your show." However, we haven't formally criticized each other.

: Do you think formal criticism of the hispanic shows would be destructive at this point in time?

A: No, I don't think it would be destructive.

Q: I think our world is secure enough to withstand criticism. Our relationships with each other are very positive and we are at a point where we're all involved actively in making the Massachusetts Latino Media Group a success.

: What is the relationship between an hispanic program and the station managers?

Q: In the case of the program Aquí, we are given total authority. We have been given autonomy in all respects except that we are asked to complete the program at a designated time.

: Do the station officials monitor the contents of the shows? Do they measure the size of the audience?

A: They don't measure the size of the audience, nor do they monitor the contents. They do, however, keep an eye on the technical aspect of the show.

: Do the narrators and the producers of hispanic programming enjoy an autonomy that other programs on the same station don't?

Q: I can't really say whether other programs enjoy the same autonomy but it seems to me that the lack of autonomy in other shows is in the format. But I still haven't heard of any cases where a station manager will tell a producer that he can't present a show.

: Are shows like Third World viewed by administrators before it is actually aired? Is there any type of censuring?

A: The program directors, the executive director, the president, and a group of administrators meet once a week to view portions of all the shows that will be aired during that week. They make an evaluation of the shows, censuring certain portions if necessary. I know specifically that Third World has been censured. But not for its contents. It has been censured because they don't provide a balance of opinions.

: On a Nosotros Theater program one of the guests, Julia Diaz, named and criticized her landlord for not properly maintaining her apartment. Does naming personal names cause problems? Can a libel suit be brought against the station?

A: I don't believe that that particular show has caused any problems.

Q: I think that it's up to the person named to ask for equal time to present his point of view.

: Do you believe a station should give equal time to opposing points of view?

Q: I personally believe in the equal-time regulation. But there are many people who say that equal-time rebuttal dilutes the point that is trying to be made. I believe that hearing an issue debated--bringing out opposing points of view--is very informative.

: Is the idea to educate the community or change their beliefs?

Q: I believe that the community should be informed, educated, and then changed. In that order. Information educates the community and then the educated community can change themselves or change the problems which confront them.

: You don't believe that reality should be colored? You want reality to be presented as it is?

Q: This depends on the kind of programming. Currently we're making a show about the political movement in South America. People could say that it is propaganda. But the facts we present have been well-researched and documented. And, if the show is documented, it's not propaganda, but history.

: Who represents the active leadership of the Latino Media Organization at the moment?

A: There are basically three people who assume leadership responsibility: the chairperson, the acting director, and the treasurer.

: What are their names?

A: Awilda Artau, Sixto Escobar and Renaldo Rivera--in that order.

: Have they held those positions since the beginning of the organization?

Q: Yes.

: There hasn't been any change in leadership?

Q: No.

: When did the Aquí show begin? And who originally developed the idea for the show?

A: Three people, one from the New York area, in July 1974, created Aquí. Roberto Lopez, a New York director, was asked to assist us with the project because he had experience making films.

: Who bought the idea for the show?

A: The station.

: But who in the station took an interest in the project?

A: No one in the station took an interest in our show. A group of people sent letters to the station demanding that we have a news show in Spanish at a certain time, and that we wanted a certain amount of time each week to broadcast Spanish shows. The officials at the station analyzed the situation and the president, vice president, and the administrators kept passing the buck and assigned the manager of the station the task of looking for people qualified to do Spanish shows. But a group of us had suggested the names of people who we thought were qualified for the job. But the manager made a search for someone to make the program and came up with Roberto Lopez, from New York, as a consultant. Then the station employed both Jorge and I--Jorge, part-time, and me as a student.

: Did the manager consult the Latino Media Group to see if Roberto was qualified for the job or if he was an adequate choice?

A: I don't know because the reason the manager brought him in was as a consultant.

: Did you have to present a proposal or a plan describing your objectives?

A: No, it was a personal interview with Jorge myself and various others. I had ten people who had already applied for the job. We interviewed each candidate and asked him, if we were to hire him, what type of program was he going to do? We received various responses and then called in the consultant. The program began to develop. We began work on July 15, 1974. The program was finished on Sunday, September 15, 1974, at 11:00 o'clock in the morning. From September to December we made a total of eight Aquí shows. On the first week of December the consultant had completed the job he was hired to do, and left. Jorge and I remained to do more shows.

: Had you and Jorge had any experience in television?

A: I was majoring in Communications, and Jorge had some experience working with children at Harvard.

Q: I also had worked on Channel Four.

A: When we first came to the United States, Jorge and I had worked with Channel Four. Previously, I had worked in Puerto Rico in television.

: Have you ever had to present to the station a document describing the general purpose of your program?

A: No. Everything was informal.

: You could present a program on any subject which interested you or the hispanic community? Do you think it would have been better to have a formal proposal?

Q: I think that the plan that Guillermo and I had about the program was clear in our own minds.

: Is the director of the station aware of your objectives?

A: The station's objectives are to have a program which would be of interest to the hispanic community.

Q: And also to retain their license.

: Those are the essential objectives of the station but what are your objectives as directors of a specific program?

A: I think the objective of any program, whether it be for the Spanish-speaking or an English-speaking audience, is the same. It is to supply information. Display creativity. Supply the language of the community.

: How are your objectives different from the station's?

A: The station's objective is to avoid pressure and to renew their license. Our objective is to create a show.

: Where do you get your ideas for a show?

A: It all begins sitting down at a desk and suddenly getting an idea. And we say, "Ah! a program!" We write it down. Then we begin to develop the idea and carry it to its end. Other ways we get our ideas is by walking through the streets and seeing what's going on. We also receive a small amount of letters which suggest ideas.

: Could you give me an example of a letter that you've received from a viewer?

Q: A fourteen-year-old boy suggested that we do a program about hispanic family life, presenting it in a positive manner. The boy said he was very worried because all that he had seen on T.V. about hispanic family life was negative. After speaking to him, Guillermo and I decided to develop the idea. The result was an Aquí show called "Cómo están mis abuelos." The program focused on what it is like to be old in the community, the role of grandparents within the hispanic family, and the image of the Latino family. Looking at other families in the community at large, the grandparents are many times alienated from the family, whereas in the hispanic community grandparents are an essential part of family life.

: Have you considered having an advisory council?

A: I personally think an advisory council would be a good idea. I've considered having an advisory council composed of ten individuals where there are ten different points of view expressed. The advisory council should consist of people outside the area of television, people like you who are concerned about what the media is doing for hispanics, other organizations such as Alianza Hispana, HOPE, E.D.C., and the Latino Media Organization. Some say that an advisory council would bring in personal conflicts where each person tries to influence another on his personal view. But in my opinion, I don't think this would happen.

Q: One of the things I like most is the autonomy I have that other directors don't. Working in this business, I know I'm lucky to be able to present almost any show that I want. The freedom I have is very enjoyable.

: Autonomy in directing the shows may be good but only to a certain extent. Suppose a station hires someone who is incompetent. The station manager really doesn't know the kinds of programs he makes because they are in a different language. The autonomy that this director has would be to the detriment of the community. What mechanism is there to insure that this does not happen?

Q: Every program has to pass the test. Each program that we make has to get the approval of the community. If we don't, it's only a matter of time before the station manager sees that we don't have any following. They'll fire us and bring in someone else.

: How do you know that a certain show has passed the test? How do you know what the reaction to the show has been?

A: We don't take polls but I have an idea whether a particular program was well-received or not. We have presented twenty-five programs--twenty-five different programs. Not one has been a repeat or anything like any other show. To date we've presented two musical programs--but they dealt with two very different kinds of music. One was a music of protest, the other was music from a local group. We've presented those twenty-five shows which is proof that we are being turned on. We have tried to establish a certain balance in the themes which we present each week.

It used to be that people would turn on a Spanish show just to hear Spanish spoken. They weren't discriminating about the kinds of programs they watched. Now people are beginning to pass judgment on the programs. They turn on the ones they enjoy and leave the other programs off. We have had good reaction to our shows. But, of course, not everybody likes all of our shows. Some they like. Some they don't like. We hope that within the twenty-five programs that people generally like Aquí. Eventhough people don't like all of our shows, we would hope that they'd say, "I may not have liked that particular show, but the people worked hard to make it."

: Then, could you say thatone of the objectives of Aquí is to present a different program for the different segments of the community, such as the different classes or the more educated in the community?

Q: No. Aquí is directed to the community as a whole. It seems to me that this is how television works. They try to make programs which appeal to a whole spectrum of people.

: What about the film you made about one of Kafka's short stories?

Q: Gabriel García, who was inspired by Kafka, wrote the program we directed. It's too bad that people always remember the name Kafka. It was Gabriel García who wrote it. The people from the community loved the show.

: How do you know they liked it?

A: People would come up to me on the street and tell me they thought the show was great. We also received many letters.

: How many letters did you receive?

Q: Right now we're not receiving many letters. This is one of the biggest problems Spanish programming in general is experiencing. People prefer to tell us personally how they felt about a show. I tell them, "If you like the show, write to me, or, if you don't like the show, write even more!"

: The hispanic community reacts differently, I think, than the Anglo community. We're not going to sit down and write an impersonal letter because we feel more comfortable speaking to the person directly and letting him know how we feel.

Q: Many times what prevents a viewer from writing is his educational level.

: Writing letters is more difficult for an hispanic person.

Q: Although they know how to write, as a teacher I know that hispanic people are very proud. They don't want to send a letter if it isn't written well.

: Do you think that there'll be a problem with hispanic programming in general--in the future or in the present--with the stations or with you yourself?

Q: With relation to Aquí, I think the manager understands the problems with the community and their reservations about writing letters. We've tried to discuss the kind of reaction to our program. The managers are satisfied with our programs. They're not stupid. They watch our program. They also ask people in the community about Aquí. They keep aware of what's happening and they have their own way of evaluating.

A: There is somewhat of a process of evaluation eventhough it is not through the formal mechanism of letter-writing and telephone calls.

: You said that you don't receive many letters. Exactly how many do you receive? One? Two? . . .

A: There are weeks that we didn't receive any.

: What about the show you presented on Cuba?

A: We didn't receive anything--either favorable or unfavorable. We presented a show on Chile and got no reaction.

: Have you ever conducted a survey?

Q: No. Yesterday I was thinking of devising a questionnaire and mailing it out. Before, we had a lot of help and we sent a press communique before each program. But this took a lot of time. We couldn't afford to spend that much time. It would be great if two or three people could volunteer to do the job for us.

: Doesn't Channel Seven announce its show in El Mundo?

A: Yes.. But we don't have enough money in our budget to publicize our programs.

: Does *Aquí* have a fixed budget?

Q: At the beginning of the year the annual budget is decided. We then make an estimate of the cost of each show. Some of the programs cost more than we had estimated, so on other programs we can't spend as much. There is a little bit of a fluctuation of the actual budget, but we try to maintain a norm.

: Do you have a bigger or smaller budget than the other Spanish shows?

A: We don't have the biggest budget but we also don't have the smallest budget.

: How is the staff chosen for hispanic programming? For example, how was María Los Ángeles Dowd chosen to replace the outgoing host of *La Caravana Hispana*?

Q: In that case, Sonia submitted her resignation and the station looked for someone to replace her. The Massachusetts Latino Media Group provided the station with a list of qualified candidates, and the station chose her.

: Who decided the time at which your program will be aired?

Q: The station decides on the time.

: Is there any conflict in timing in the Spanish shows?

Q: No, there are no conflicts. When the Latino Media Group negotiated with Channels Five and Seven, they asked that the Spanish programs shown on that station be aired at different times.

: Was the change of time of your show, from 11 o'clock to one o'clock, a decision of the station?

Q: Yes. We still haven't assessed the effect of this change, but I think it's probably for the better for the community in order to convey a message to the community. It is estimated that there are three times the amount of television shows on at eleven o'clock--this includes all of television. The problem with our show is that it's shown every two weeks.

: Also, a lot of people go to church at eleven o'clock.

Q: For that reason the change to one o'clock is better. People have returned from church, they've already eaten and other family members have come to visit. They watch television and Spanish shows become very useful.

: Do you feel that the focus of Aquí is local, national, or international? For example, I heard a commentary about Aquí which said that the program had an international appeal.

Q: We try to balance what the other two Spanish shows provide. The other two programs are interviews with local people. Aquí treats themes which are applicable to the local situation, but are not really local.

: Is there any competition among the Spanish programs?

Q: No. We don't want to compete with the other Spanish shows. If Ford, General Motors, Chrysler or General Electric wanted to buy commercial time on our shows, then there would be competition. Another reason there is no competition is because we are trying to provide the community with a conscience of being Latino. The word "latino" is an international term. We are a minority in this area, but we are not a minority in the world. There are 180 million latinos in North and South America.

: What is the relationship between Aquí and the publicity department?

Q: There isn't any. Publicity doesn't play a role or help latino programming in general. The Goya Show is different because it was bought from a private interest in Puerto Rico and included its own commercials.

: Does Aquí have any commercials?

Q: The program doesn't have any commercials itself because it isn't a program where we can put commercials. Whatever commercials there are on the program are put there by the station.

: Have you made any overtures to the hispanic business community for commercials?

Q: We have the freedom to solicit commercials if we want, but we are very busy in the other aspects of putting Aquí together.

: Who would sell the time to you?

Q: The station. Aquí is not a public affairs program. It's a public service program. The two are very different. Public affairs cannot be commercial. Public service can be commercial if there is a private enterprise that's willing to put them on.

: Do they pay the same rate as anybody else?

Q: Sure. Why not. They pay the standard rate. It doesn't matter who it is or what it is. It depends on the time.

: Are your salaries more or less than what's given to the other hispanics working in the communications media?

Q: I don't know if we're paid more or less than the others. I do know that within the station, our salary level is much lower than anyone else's with the same education and professional background. There are many times that someone's salary can be low but the budget for his or her program is higher. In our case, our salary is low but our budget is more.

: The impression that I have is that the program is very separated from the general organization of the station. Is this impression correct?

A: No.

: If the quality and the contents of your program depend on your personalities more than in the other programming--for example, if the director can see and understand Third World than he has a different relationship with the people on that show than he does with you, how can he look for the quality of your program?

Q: We are making ourselves understood visually in everything that we do. We make a lot of visual programs which help in understanding the contents. The programs can almost be understood when the volume is turned off. On other programs we use sub-titles. If someone doesn't understand Spanish, he can read the subtitles.

: Do all the programs have subtitles?

Q: We are trying to put subtitles on all the programs. It is our first priority. The program is primarily and foremost directed to the hispanic community, but we put subtitles so that we don't exclude the community-at-large. We won't change our program just to please the community-at-large. We want our message to be carried to everyone.

: Aren't the subtitles expensive?

Q: They're not expensive because the machinery to make the subtitles was already at the station and the people who do it are paid well. The subtitles take two or three days, and in that sense they are expensive. Guillermo and I spend a lot of time translating the show and putting them on the tape. That's expensive. Time is money, in any business. But the station didn't have to buy any additional material or pay anyone extra, because the people were already here. The machine was here and we're just taking advantage of the technology that's available to us. It's a great toy. I never had a nicer toy in my life. Maybe that's why I'm remaining at the station under-salaried. Really, I'd rather get underpaid and have a good time than get paid more and have a lousy time. I get a lot of satisfaction from my work and in this alienated existence and society, you have to weigh the satisfaction you get from your work and its monetary worth. There are a lot of people in my community that are doing a lot worse than I am. They have to support a family of five children. I'm humble and grateful for the opportunity I have.

: Which is more important for the hispanic community, the press or television?

Q: I think that books are the most important, in terms of ideal effect. The ideal -- this is a vicious cycle. I love films and television, yet, at the same time, I understand that it's an addictive, passive medium. Hopefully, our programming is of the type that activates the viewer to do something about what he or she sees--whether it's against whatever the issue is, go out and read a book about it. Go out and take your kids to such a place. Have a nice conversation with your grandparents. I think the problem with our community is that the literate level is very low. Last night I heard a lecturer at Harvard who mentioned that the amount of money spent on books in this country in a one-year period is something like 1.4 billion dollars, while fourteen billion dollars is spent on a thirty-second commercial for television.

: Which communications media has the biggest effect on the community?

Q: Television--because it's there and people watch it.

: In what sense does television have the most effect?

Q: It provides information to the community more than either the newspapers or books.

A: The reason television is more popular is that it is pushed on Americans. In Latin American countries, there is television, but it isn't as heavily pushed. In France and in Spain television isn't commercial. It's the property of the government.

: Is that kind of television more educational?

A: Yes. It is a lot more educational. They only have five to eight minutes of commercial time in an hour. They put all the commercials on together, one after the other, in those five to eight minutes. They dispense with the commercials and say, "Let's get back to Beethoven." They show what the government is doing in the field of medicine or they'll have a soccer match.

: What's the future of Aquí.

Q: I like the organic development of the program.

: What do you mean by that?

Q: The program will develop and we will develop in our daily work, instead of making a two-year or five-year plan. I like the freedom of being able to let the program develop naturally over time. When I do a documentary, I do it that way. I have an idea of the theme that I'd like to talk about, I even sometimes have an idea of what the problem is, and the solution. But the program takes a life of its own. And I learn. That's cool. I love to learn.

: Is it an advantage or a disadvantage showing Aquí every two weeks?

A: It depends on how you look at it. If we could have the kind of program we want each week, then it's a disadvantage to have it every other week. But with the facilities we have --the budget, the time, the personnel--we prefer to do the program every two weeks, in order to have a quality program each time. If we had one-hundred dollars to make a program every two weeks and we wanted to do a program every week, we'd only have fifty dollars.

: Do you think you've lost any audience because it's shown every two weeks?

A: We haven't lost any audience. We've gained an audience because people aren't accustomed to us. They watch the news every day at six o'clock. It becomes boring.

PART II. Hispanic Agencies.

Interview with Miguel Torrado,
Executive Director of Hispanic Office
of Planning and Evaluation, 1976.

Interviewer: Who was responsible for the creation of this agency?

Torrado: The agency was started back in 1970. The idea started in 1969. The agency itself was started in 1970 by a group of locals in Boston who believed that there was a need for a different type of agency. I personally don't know any of those people, so I can't give you their names, but it was a group of Boston residents.

: Puerto Ricans or . . . ?

T: Mostly Puerto Ricans and Hispanos in general.

: Where did the original funding come from:

T: The original money came from Permanent Charities. First of all, Permanent Charities has continued to support HOPE throughout its four or five years of existence, but there have been other funding sources as well: the Himes Trust; companies in the area like Boston Gas, for example, have contributed money to HOPE. This year, for the first time we are receiving a grant from the Ford Foundation in the amount of $75,000 . . . for the year. Our budget has continually increased during the five years. Originally, we started with something like $25,000 for the first year. This year it is $160,000.

: Is that including the $75,000?

T: Right. It includes several different organizations, such as Ford Foundation, Permanent Charities, Himes Trust, and we also get contract monies for work we perform.

: So the agency has been in operation for five years. Are there any written proposals in existence?

T: Yes. A large part of our budget is not only for ourselves but for other agencies. So we do write proposals. If Alianza Hispana is thinking of doing a project, and if at that time they don't have a person who can write the proposal, they come to us. We write it for them and that is part of our job.

: What were the original objectives of the agency?

T: The agency was created because the people who thought of it felt that there was a need for a different type of agency.

They thought, and rightly so at that time, that the agencies that were giving services to the community, such as Alianza Hispana and other agencies, could provide those services but could not, in the long run, do any planning which could really solve the problems of the hispanic community in the long run. Therefore, we were created as a planning agency and as an evaluation agency so that we could not only do advocacy for the hispanic people, but could plan long range programs and coordinate programs between agencies. The idea was to have an agency that could have a high-level linkage between established area agencies (state, federal, city agencies) and the hispanic community.

: Have these objectives changed much over the years?

T: You could say yes and no. The general objectives haven't changed, but as time has progressed we have become a little more sophisticated about how to go about our business. And we've also expanded to become no longer just a Boston agency, but a statewide agency. We have taken those original objectives which we had in terms of Boston [and] had them statewide.

: I assume there has been a turnover in the directorship of the program since the beginning?

T: As far as the directors go, there is a Board of Directors, and originally it was a small group. Last year the Board of Directors was changed and expanded to forty-five members, and that Board of Directors then elects an executive committee of ten members. Now, one third of the Board of Directors is elected every year, because the Directors are elected for three years. Every year only fifteen of those forty-five are changed. As far as the Executive Director is concerned, there have been four Executive Directors, including myself. The one before me was here for two years. I came in in September and I'll be here for two or three years at the most.

: So there is no specific reason for these changes?

T: Well, for one thing, someone that is employed as an executive director . . . it's my personal belief that it's hard to keep somebody in a position such as this for more than two or three years because you come in, you put in your little grain of sand, and by two or three years the job is no longer new to you. As far as the Board of Directors, it is structured so that there is a change every year.

: Do you rely a lot on volunteer help for your agency, or do you go on a salary basis?

T: It is mostly salary basis. We do have four students who work on a work-study basis. They get credit for this work at different universities around the Boston area.

: Could you give me, more or less, the organizational structure of the agency?

T: First of all, there is the membership, on a wide level. HOPE is a corporation and it has 300 members of the corporation. Those members elect a Board of Directors which is responsible for governing the agency. But they meet only about every two months or so. The Board of Directors elects an executive committee of about ten people, and that includes the President, Vice-President, Treasurer and the usual officers. The Executive Committee meets about every two weeks. That is the body which is responsible for setting policy on a regular basis. Below that is the Executive Director who is the linkage between the staff and the Board of Directors. Then there is the staff. The staff is divided into a central staff and three centers plus one specific program. The central staff has myself, a program coordinator, and a staff of planners provides technical assistance to the specific centers. Then we have three specific centers: one that provides technical assistance to whomever asks for it, one that is in charge of community developmental planning, and one that is in charge of information. This last one tries to act as an information bond between the community and the larger Anglo-community.

: Are you part of a larger entity?

T: No, we are independent.

: Are the final decisions made by this committee or by any specific individual?

T: Basically the decisions are made by me, the Executive Director, and the reality of the situation is that I have the flexibility to do more or less what I want within established policy. The Executive Committee can overrule me, and they also establish policy. They make policy decisions. Higher than the Executive Committee is the Board of Directors. In most cases they make the final decisions. However, the entire membership has to agree with the Board's decision, and they only meet once or twice a year.

: How is the personnel recruited?

T: Normally the Board of Directors names a committee which interviews and recruits an Executive Director. The Executive Director then has the responsibility of hiring the rest of the staff.

: Are there any specific qualifications which are required by an applicant?

T: We require that those applicants seeking a professional position on our staff have, at the very least, a Bachelor's degree. However, we prefer that an applicant have a Master's degree and, in addition, experience in working with the hispanic community. We also require that the applicant be bilingual and we usually prefer native speakers of Spanish.

: Do you select hispanic applicants over other applicants?

T: Obviously, because of discrimination laws we can't select certain applicants over others. By law we can require that the applicant be bilingual, but we can't require that he/she be black, white, hispanic, or whatever. However, we do prefer hispanic individuals because they have a cultural understanding of the problems faced by the hispanic community. But that does not preclude hiring somebody who is Anglo or American Black if he/she is truly bilingual and meets our requirements.

: What is the ethnic composition of the staff?

T: The staff mainly consists of Puerto Ricans.

: What percentage of the staff is Puerto Rican?

T: Everyone on our staff, except for two individuals, are [sic] Puerto Rican. I'm Puerto Rican. The program coordinator is from Colombia and one of our secretaries is from Cuba.

: The staff consists totally of hispanic individuals then?

T: Right. But three of the four students working as interns with us are not hispanic. However, they are bilingual. After they complete their internship and graduate from their respective colleges, they may be hired because we already know what kind of work they are capable of producing.

: Was the particular location for the agency chosen for a specific reason?

T: I honestly don't know. The selection of this site had been chosen long before I was affiliated with the agency. But I have the impression that it was chosen because the U.C.P.C. --the United Community Planning Corporation--was located here and it facilitated communication between the two offices. It's a central location and very convenient. But aside from these guesses I really don't know of any specific reason for the selection of this locale.

: What have been the areas in which your agency has experienced the greatest success?

T: In recent years HOPE has become "the" agency that local, state and federal Anglo-agencies contact when they have a project which relates directly to the hispanic community.

HOPE has continued not only to exist but has prospered while other hispanic agencies have had to close down. We consider this a big success.

We have also done work for non-hispanic agencies in addition to our work with other local hispanic agencies. For instance, we've done recruiting for the firefighter's exam.

: What have been the areas in which you haven't had much success?

T: I don't think we can honestly say there's any area in which we've failed. On the other hand, I don't think anybody at HOPE is totally satisfied with the way things are. Otherwise, HOPE wouldn't have a reason to exist. If we had accomplished all our goals, our problems would have been solved and there would be no need for an agency like HOPE. But, of course, there are many more problems in the hispanic community which need to be solved.

: What has been the biggest contribution HOPE has made to the Spanish-speaking community?

T: HOPE provides a high level of competence which we feel is important for the hispanic community and the non-hispanic community to see. We are capable of doing very professional work and have competed with the best organizations throughout the state. More important, HOPE has become a model for the hispanic community. The community can look to us and see that we've been successful. We feel this provides a stimulus for the hispanic community.

: What factors limit the effective functioning of your agency?

T: Money. That always seems to be a limiting factor. But more important in hampering our effective functioning is the environment in which we operate. Whatever we do or whatever we get, we have to fight for. We're fighting against racism and discrimination which aren't easy problems to overcome.

: What has been the most effective form of advertising that your agency has to offer?

T: We publish newsletters four times a year to people on our mailing list. We also keep in close touch with most of the hispanic agencies in the area. So they usually know what we have to offer. We also, from time to time, conduct seminars and have various activities for the hispanic community so that they can be in touch with what HOPE is doing.

: What are the most significant projects HOPE has undertaken recently?

T: HOPE has undertaken a project which deals with the rights of hispanic inmates now in the prisons throughout Massachusetts. We've received a $179,000 grant from the federal government, plus a matching sum from the state to fund our project. The project allows us to investigate and seek remedies for the problems facing the Spanish-speaking inmate. As the situation currently exists, the hispanic inmate suffers more than any other prisoner because of the language problem and other problems which specifically relate to him. The situation is compounded by the fact that there haven't been any efforts on the part of the correctional officers to deal with the problems of the Spanish-speaking inmate.

: Does HOPE have any contact with any local institutions?

T: Members of HOPE's Board of Directors participate on the boards of other organizations, such as A.B.C.D. Keeping in touch with the various area agencies gives HOPE an input into the policy-making bodies in Massachusetts. So we feel that having contact with the various agencies is important.

: Does HOPE have any checks and balances to determine the effectiveness of your agency?

T: That's a hard question to answer. If you mean checks and balances internally, we do. Our corporation structure which allows input from everybody in the different levels of decision making is one means of keeping a check and balance on the agency. As a mechanism for evaluating our performance, we try, every year, to make a list of specific goals for that year so that at the end of the year we can refer back to that list to determine our accomplishments and our failures.

: As a final question, Mr. Torrado, have there been any hispanic agencies in the area which have had to close their doors? And can you point to the specific reasons which caused them to cease functioning?

T: There have been many hispanic agencies that have been in existence for only one or two years, such as Upgrowth, Concilio Hispano de Massachusetts, and many more. The reasons for their closure are many and varied. I don't think I'm qualified to give you any specific reasons for their shut-down, but in general probably some have closed because we still have a lot to learn about the way agencies operate.

Another reason could have been that these agencies worked in a hostile environment which wasn't conducive to functioning effectively. There are other reasons as well; many of the agencies began with the idea that they were going to solve the everyday problems which the hispanic community faced.

There has been a change in leadership in the community because there were people who felt that the old leadership didn't have the right techniques to deal effectively with the problems of the community. The old leadership was replaced by people from the community who had the courage to learn to deal more effectively with the system.

Perhaps one very important reason which forced some of the agencies to close was lack of appropriate funds. By the law of survival only those agencies who had enough money and could deal with the system to their advantage survived.

A Round Table Discussion of Alianza Hispana,
a Multi-service Organization for the
Spanish Speaking Community of Boston, 1976

Interviewer: Could you give an account of the history of Alianza Hispana?

Angeles Rodriguez: The agency was founded in 1971 as an officially recognized private corporation. Alianza Hispana actually began in 1969, through the efforts of tenants from the North Dorchester and Roxbury areas who banded together in an attempt to solve the ever-increasing problems faced by the hispanic community. From 1971 to 1974, Alianza Hispana was working as a part of the state's model cities project from which they received funding. But in 1974 the model cities program had been cancelled as a result of a presidential mandate. At that point in time, Alianza Hispana became more of an independent agency that had to look for new sources of funding.

: It seems as if whenever the hispanic community reaches its due recognition the doors are suddenly closed. When the hispanics organized as a community to work for betterment through the model cities program, the program was cut. Where did the agency go for the necessary funds?

R: We have gone to three agencies which now fund us. We went to what was formerly known as C.B.R.S. (Community Betterment Revenue Sharing) which handled the allocation of federal government grants. Another source of funding was the Department of Public Welfare. Alianza Hispana was contracted by the department to offer services to the hispanic community which the welfare offices were not equipped to offer because of a lack of bilingual staff. Our third source of funding was the United Way.

: Do the agencies which fund you require documentation of need?

R: The United Way requires a yearly report. The Welfare Department requires detailed documentation. The city is a bit less demanding, but they require quite a bit of paper work.

: How has the agency maintained its financial credibility?

R: We employ an accountant and a bookkeeper who do a very accurate job. Alianza Hispana also opens its books to the agencies which provide funding.

: What is the structure of Alianza Hispana?

R: The present structure of Alianza Hispana is composed of four divisions: education, social services, housing and youth affairs. Shortly we will change our existing structure and expand our education division which will be deigned to include rehabilitation, vocational training, and employment assistance. We will also expand our housing division where we will assist individuals seeking housing and also orient new tenants. A fifth division in consumer education will be added. There will be a joint area of human services and social services where we will offer psychiatric help. Finally, our youth department will offer counselling services by specially trained staff members.

: Juan, you work with the education division of Alianza Hispana. Could you tell us what the educational opportunities offered by your agency are?

Juan Muñoz: We offer classes which prepare students for the high school equivalency exams and we also offer English as a second language. We also assist hispanic students who are having difficulty in their college courses because of a language problem.

: Do you use peer-teaching methods?

M: Yes, we do because we feel it provides good motivation.

: What effect have the courses had which you offer to your students?

M: I have found that once our students have mastered the English language they are in a better position to seek more gainful employment. We also encourage those students who have successfully passed the high school equivalency exam to go on to college.

: Could you tell us about the other aspects of your education programs, such as the tenant education classes?

M: In dealing with housing problems, Alianza Hispana has discovered that landlords are not always at fault in housing disputes. By conducting workshops we have attempted to educate people about caring for their apartments. When appropriate, we also encourage tenants to investigate owning their own homes.

Luis Sesane: Our main objective is to have a strong, unified, harmonious community. The only way we can realize our objective is to stimulate those who want to become homeowners and to educate them as to the necessary care and the probable legalities of owning a house.

: How would you handle a situation in which a man came to Alianza Hispana and said that he would like to own his own home but doesn't speak English well nor does he earn a big salary and if he were to buy a home it wouldn't be in that neighborhood?

S: This problem wouldn't have arisen because before we offer assistance we have forms which must be filled out which include information about employment status, salary, any debts which they might have, and their feelings about living in the area. Those wishing to buy homes must realize that the assistance we offer is technical. We don't have funds to lend to potential homeowners.

If we run across a situation in which a family is truly capable of buying a house, we provide them with a list of available houses in the area. All the houses on our list have been checked out by an architect which Alianza employs. If he decides the house is in good condition, we discuss the estimated value of the house and advise our clients.

: One problem in certain areas is that banks will not lend money to any potential homeowner in areas where they feel they would be taking a risk. Even though this practice is illegal, it is still being done. I'm aware that there is a program run by the mayor's office which offers financial assistance to homeowners in these "red-lined" areas and at the same time makes it difficult for banks to discriminate on the basis of where a person lives.

S: The program is called H.I.P. (Housing Improvement Program). Eligibility requirements are home ownership and a guarantee that the homeowner will maintain the property for at least three years. A rehabilitation expert appointed by the city evaluates the house and makes specific recommendations of the necessary repairs. The homeowner applies to a bank for a home improvement loan backed up by the city.

A Round Table Discussion of the Compañeros de la Comunidad, an Hispanic Community Action Group in Lynn, Massachusetts, 1976

Interviewer: I understand that the hispanic community in Lynn is beginning to organize a group of residents who will look for ways to solve the problems which the community is facing. Could you tell us what the current state of affairs is in Lynn?

Arturo: A small group of hispanos moved to Lynn in 1970 and since then the hispanic community has continually increased. We formed a group called "Compañeros de la Comunidad" where all hispanic residetns of Lynn could meet and talk. We have attempted to solve the numerous problems which face the community. In 1972 we were granted, through a Proclamation of the Commonwealth, the official right to represent the hispanic community. We have been working vigorously to solve many of the problems and we're a young organization who are still growing. This year we intend to hold elections in order to bring in fresh faces and new ideas into our organization. Last year I was elected President and Esperanza was elected Secretary. Together we were able to launch a massive effort to inform the hispanic residents of Lynn of their rights.

: Esperanza, you've worked with the community in various capacities. What do you consider to be some of the most vital issues facing the community?

Esperanza: The problem of adequate health care is probably the most important issue which is facing the community. There is one hospital in Lynn which services all of the hispanic community. There are no interpreters or bilingual staff employed by the hospital. As a result many crucial problems have arisen over the inability of doctors and nurses to communicate with sometimes seriously ill hispanic patients.

: How has your organization attempted to deal with this problem?

E: Our organization circulated a petition, containing numerous signatures, demanding the services of an interpreter. The petition was presented to hospital representatives who were designated to meet with our organization. The result was that the representatives decided there was no need for such services. It was their opinion that the responsibility to provide a patient with an interpreter belonged to the community. We felt that it was the obligation of the hospital to provide patients with a bilingual staff member!

A: Similar problems have resulted in hospitals in the Boston and Lawrence areas. After many long and tiring meetings the hospitals consented to providing patients with the necessary interpreters.

: Who will participate in the elections which your organization will hold?

A: Any adult who is an active member in our organization can vote in the elections. We require that there be at least fifteen members at all times for official elections to take place. The offices to which people are elected are President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer--and all the officers will represent the hispanic community with any problem or grievance they may have.

PART III. Hispanic Access to Higher Education

An interview with several hispanic students from the 1976 graduating class of Chamberlayne Junior College

Interviewer: We are at the end of the school year and the graduation ceremonies of many colleges and universities will soon be taking place. Often some feel that the Hispanics are not included in these festivities but it is surprising to see the number of Hispanics that have graduated from junior colleges and four-year colleges in the past few years and who are graduating this year.

Elisa, I know you will be graduating as a secretary from Chamberlayne Junior College today. How did you find out that Chamberlayne had the program you wanted?

Elisa: I went to an agency known as Puente to inquire about the colleges in Massachusetts and to find out what was offered as a course of study by each.

: Was it difficult to get accepted into Chamberlayne, Maria?

Maria: No, we had no problem.

: Were you attending Chamberlayne on scholarships?

Maria: Yes, we were.

: How did you get your scholarships?

Maria: We went to Puente where they gave us the necessary forms to fill out. If the need is there, there are ways to get the financial assistance.

: Did you need special preparation to be accepted to Chamberlayne?

Maria: All that was necessary was a high school diploma.

: What are your plans for the future?

Maria: I will be attending Children's Hospital Nursing School.

Elisa: I will transfer my credits to Boston University and will begin in May. I'd like to go into special education.

Martha: I will be going to Salem State College to get my B.A. in commercial education.

: Do you plan to work while you study?

Martha: Yes. I am going to try to find a job through the college work-study program.

: Did you work while attending Chamberlayne?

Martha: Yes. I tutored hispanic students.

Maria: I worked in the mailroom. But before that, I worked as a nurse's aide at Beth Israel Hospital.

: Was studying difficult?

Maria: It was difficult, but it is bearable when you have a goal that you're striving for. There were many sleepless nights devoted to studying and many times when we missed lunches. But in the end it was all worthwhile.

: Did you feel alone at times?

Maria: Many times I felt lonely, but my classmates were around to encourage me and to listen to my problems. Every student goes through times when they wonder if it's all worthwhile. Having someone to share these feelings with and someone to remind you of your goals helps you get through difficult times. There is a counsellor's office at Chamberlayne where we gather and study when we need to and help each other out with problems.

: Martha, do you plan to continue your education or are you going to work?

Martha: I feel that I have studied a great deal thus far, and I want to work for a while. I have my own family now--two sons and a husband--and I feel that since I have the opportunity, I should work and help with the economic burdens of my family.

: Priscilla, you are also graduating from Chamberlayne. What do you plan to do?

Priscilla: I plan to work also because I have a son and it has been quite difficult, even though quite worthwhile, studying these two years.

: Who took care of your son while you studied?

Priscilla: It was very difficult the first semester because he was too young for a day-care center, but during the second semester I was able to put him in a day-care center which made attending school easier for me.

: Miguel, you have studied a great deal before you entered Chamberlayne. Why don't you tell us a little about your background.

Miguel: The first thing that interested me as a field of endeavors was the business world. I studied business administration and accounting. After graduating, I worked for two years but found that I was tied to a desk and the work was repetitive and monotonous. I then decided to go into a field where I could help people. I studied to be a counsellor and eventually worked at it for a while. I then became very interested in the arts. The field had always fascinated me, so I decided to speak to some friends who attended Chamberlayne. I went to the school and spoke to some of the professors and found that this was a school where students received individualized attention. Now that I've graduated from Chamberlayne, I plan to continue studying now at the Boston Architectural Center.

: What courses are offered at Chamberlayne?

Miguel: Chamberlayne offers a computer operator and repair course. It offers executive, legal, medical, and statistical secretarial courses. Also offered is an accounting major. Chamberlayne is also the only bilingual institution of higher education in the Boston area.

(Outside, after commencement exercises of the graduating class of 1976 from Chamberlayne Junior College.)

: José, how do you feel about your wife's graduation from Chamberlayne?

José: I am very proud of her. I think the sacrifices we have both made over the past two years have been well worth it. I am very happy.

: Did you have trouble taking care of the children?

Martha: No, because my husband is disabled and he was able to stay home and care for them when they returned home from school.

: Carmen, how do you feel?

Carmen: I am elated. I owe it all to my mother and my family and I hope all goes well from here on in.

: Mrs. Romero, how do you feel? Is she your only daughter?

Mrs. Romero: No, I have five children of which she is the oldest. I feel very proud of my daughter on this day that is so grand for her.

: For the Latin community as a whole it is an honor that so many Latin students are working so hard, thus giving a good name to the community.

Carmen: We have, at Chamberlayne, many Latin students. There are some Puerto Rican, some Cuban, some Dominican and many other Latin countries which are represented in our student body.

: Mrs. Romero, would you advise other Latin families in the area to encourage their sons or daughters to attend college?

Mrs. Romero: Yes. They should work hard to better themselves through education. They should have pride in their families and in their heritage and prove that just because we are Latin it doesn't mean that we are behind the times. We have to unite as a community and strive to better ourselves through education--young and old alike.

: I wish you the very best of luck, and thank you for allowing me to share your joy on this great day in your lives. Once again, congratulations to you, Carmen, and to all the others who have graduated on this day.

Interview with Four Harvard Medical Students on the Issue of Hispanic Access to the Medical Profession, 1976

Interviewer: Why do you want to become a doctor?

Juan Alvino: That is a question put to us very often. I got the idea while I was in college. I was studying in Philadelphia, and began working with high school students in the community. Originally, I was going into education; however, while working with the students in the community, I became aware of the many problems which faced the community, such as drug addiction, abortion, and health-related problems. I realized that no one was attempting to solve these problems and that there were too many people working in the field of education and housing. So I decided that I would go into medicine and try to work in this area.

: Having the desire to become a doctor and actually becoming a doctor are two very different things. Was it very difficult to make your dreams a reality?

Alvino: It was very difficult because my major in college was economics. So I graduated without the courses required for medical school. Even though I had received my Bachelor's degree I had to enroll at another university in order to take courses which would fulfill the requirements for medical school.

: This then means that a person who is involved in seemingly unrelated fields of study can, if they so desire, apply to a medical school?

Alvino: Absolutely.

: When one is dealing with economics he or she must deal with certain intellectual philosophies which may differ greatly from the intellectual philosophies of a physician. For example, you must think like a doctor, not like an economist, when dealing with someone's life. Were there certain attitude changes you had to go through before entering the medical field?

Alvino: I feel that a doctor has to commit himself to his profession. More important than philosophical changes are the decisions a person must make. He or she must realize that in order to be a doctor he or she must commit him or herself to constant studying. In addition, he or she must be on top of all the new scientific developments. In economics I was able to study certain concepts and then synthesize them. In medicine, I have to know specific and accurate data.

: When you first decided to become a doctor, Yvette, what was the reaction of your family and friends?

Yvette Torres: I was always interested in medicine. My father didn't think that it was reasonable because I was a female. He said it would be a waste of time and money because I would eventually marry and have children and I would not pursue my career. He wanted me to go to nursing school. I started nursing, but when I realized that I had the capacity to become a doctor, I decided to change my professional goal of becoming a nurse to becoming a doctor.

: How old were you when you made this decision?

Torres: I was in high school.

: Had you taken any science courses?

Torres: I had taken biology and chemistry, and I like the courses a lot.

: Did you tell any of your science teachers that you were thinking of becoming a doctor?

Torres: No, because I never had a good student-teacher relationship with any of them.

: This means that you followed your ambitions even though your teachers showed no interest in you as a student and even though your father wanted you to be a nurse. How did you end up at Harvard Medical School despite those obstacles?

Torres: I was given a lot of support by Aspira. My parents did not know how to give me the leadership and guidance I needed, so I went to Aspira and they helped me to acquire the necessary applications for admission and financial aid, and they also gave me advice concerning medical school. Aspira is an organization which helps hispanic students apply to the different colleges and graduate schools of their choice. There is no chapter in the Boston area, but they exist in most of the other cities with high hispanic population, such as Chicago, New York, Florida, New Jersey and Cleveland.

: You were finally accepted to Harvard Medical School and had to study a great deal. How difficult was Medical School?

Torres: It was difficult because it is a lot of work and I had never studied as much as I do at Harvard. The work is so much that I have to dedicate lots of time if I want to do well.

: This is your last year, Emilio, which means that you were one of the first hispanics at Harvard. You have been through what these students are now going through. Could you tell me what the atmosphere was like when you first came to Harvard Medical School?

Emilio Carillo: Another hispanic student, Jaime Rivera, and I were the only hispanic students at Harvard and we felt like two rare birds. We felt like a species that did not fit in. Our classmates were sons of the doctors who were teaching our classes. They were the children of the American aristocracy. They had been educated in the best schools in the United States. Thus we felt very strange. That caused a strong unity between us. We felt very alienated. This gave us the push we needed to organize and bring more hispanic students to Harvard. That is how the Borinquen Health Organization got its start.

: Are there chapters of this organization in other cities?

Carillo: Yes, there are some in New York. In Boston there are three, one at Harvard, Boston University and Tufts University.

: A lot of hispanic students have the desire to go to medical school but are doubtful of their ability. What do you have to say to these people?

Carillo: The first thing I say is that the study of science as an undergraduate is important but that the actual practice has very little to do with what was studied in those courses. I would say that the most important aspect of a doctor is the interest in the life of another human being. The doctor must be willing to listen. He must know how to listen. Many doctors do not know how to listen. He must also be able to work well with others in his field as well as related fields. A doctor is not an island. He is constantly working with others. What he or she learns the first time or in the first two years of medical school is a totally different world from what he or she learns in the last two years of medical school. In these two years a medical student goes to the hospitals and works with the sick. It's almost a separate and unique science. That is why I feel that if any high school or even a college student feels that because of low grades in the sciences they are unable to pursue a career as a doctor, they must realize that because of their desire they have something to offer humanity. They should seek advice and take the necessary steps to pursue a medical career.

: Did you always want to be a doctor?

Carillo: Since I started college I decided I wanted to be a doctor. In high school I took some science courses and was very interested.

: We have here a representative of the poor white students. This is a group that is a minority within a minority at Harvard Medical School. How would you reflect on some of the things that went through your mind as this issue came into focus?

Mariot Murphy: An issue which was discussed in Dr. Davis' report on minorities at Harvard* was the implication that minority students were somehow not as well prepared for medical school as other students were. Dr. Davis' definition of a minority included all those coming from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. These implications were totally unfounded but the trend has been set for others to agree that minority students don't have the proper background and that all people, regardless of race, from socio-economically disadvantaged areas, do not have the proper background. This is in fact totally false. People realize that those who have been trained as doctors are not delivering the necessary health care. They are beginning to realize that minority students have a background that particularly suits them for various pursuits in medicine. As well as being totally competent in the necessary sciences, they have special talents that are needed and have not been supplied by the medical profession thus far. They have a knowledge of their language, their culture, and a special perspective on society. This can really contribute to improving the health care that is being delivered. Working people from all backgrounds are beginning to realize that they are not getting the medical care that they really need.

: Where di you grow up?

Murphy: I grew up in Fort Green in Brooklyn, New York.

: What was the health care like in your neighborhood?

Murphy: For health care, people went to Brooklyn Hospital. They were not able to receive the medical care that they needed.

: Is your father a doctor?

Murphy: Absolutely not.

: Do you feel that minority students are keeping white students out of school?

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*Dr. Davis is a professor at Harvard Medical School who published an article which claimed that at medical schools, such as Harvard, minority students are not faring as well as other students. These claims have been invalidated by the President, the Dean, and the professors of Harvard Medical School.

Murphy: No. There is a large pool of applicants from diverse backgrounds. All of these applicants are qualified; however, there is no way that they can all be accepted. This situation can be rectified by adding places instead of cutting them.

: How can someone try to get in touch with you as a group if one might find it necessary?

Torres: We can be reached at the Borinquen Health Organization, 107 Avenue Louis Pasture, Boston, Mass. 02115, Post Office Box 273. The telephone number is 277-0877.

PART IV. Housing and the Spanish Speaking

Interview with Luz Cuadrado, Danny Soltren, and Concepción Acevedo of Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción, 1976.

[In 1969, a group of older, low-income residents of Boston's South End faced the threat of being evicted from their homes due to the renovation plans announced for the city of Boston. For the tenants of the South End, the first few years of the decade of the seventies were years of crisis. They were faced with such problems as they confronted the threat of eviction: they had to contend with funds being cut off, with political manipulation, and with violent opposition to their ideas. But the tenants --organized under ETC (Emergency Tenants Council), later known as IBA or Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción--took as their motto: "We shall not be moved from Parcel 19."

Today, after all their trials and tribulations, temporary disillusionment and setbacks, even after suffering sabotage, the impossible is true! IBA is carrying out her promise: the construction of a community out of a "barrio," an attractive and clean neighborhood where the children can grow and prosper.

With the development of Villa Victoria, the hopes and aspirations of an invincible community have come to be. A community has proved to the rest of the world and to herself its success by developing a shining example of unity and progress.]

* * * * *

Interviewer: I've lived in Boston for a long time and remember clearly what existed in the South End before we had the towers, the new homes, and all this new area. It's certainly a great honor to know that Hispanics were responsible for all this beautiful work. Luz, can you tell us how the I.B.A. began?

Cuadrado: Inquilinos Boricuas en Accion began around the issue of a small park that was on Pembroke Street which was called "Jose de Diego Park." People used to throw rubbish, bottles and cans there. The neighborhood decided they'd like to do something about the area, such as setting it aside as a recreational area or a little park for the neighborhood. Well, at the same time, the BRA (Boston Redevelopment Authority) was tearing down some buildings in the South End and the American community in the area was pretty enthusiastic about the BRA's plan for renovating this area. The plans had gone down to Washington, D. C., and the BRA's proposal had been approved in 1965. So then we arrived on the scene, almost two years later. The Spanish-speaking community hadn't been informed of any of this, you see, and we didn't know very much about this plan. We began to organize around the park issue and suddenly people began to realize that our own neighborhood was being threatened! They were saying: "Hey, look, the bulldozers are coming and they're taking down this whole neighborhood of ours. They're tearing down our houses. They're going to make us move out."

: Where did they plan to move you to?

C: Well, what usually happens in cases of urban renewal like this is that old houses are knocked down in order to put up new housing or to renovate old places into new office space, apartments, etc. In this case all the people would've been moved to Columbia Point or other areas in Dorchester, the only places where housing is cheap and we can live. The idea was to move us more or less "out"--to live further away, near the black community, towards Dorchester, Columbia Point, and Mission Hill. Then they would build up housing of greater luxury for middle-income people here in the South End and take over where the Puerto Rican people had been living to make room for others. They had planned for some recreational areas and had made plans for elderly housing, but they had planned for very few units for low-income families. In this area, the majority of the people, as you know, need low-income housing.

: Yes, because the Hispanic community--as well as many other groups, such as the elderly, the low-income white families, and other minorities--had always been living in the South End.

C: Yes, the South End is what you'd call a "Port of Entry" for all immigrants--Chinese, Syrians, Greeks, blacks, workers, people of the working class.

: Was relocation viewed as a threat to those people?

C: As I said, automatically the tenants would be moved out and as you know they'd have to serve us an eviction notice, but that was just a formality for they'd planned to tear many of these buildings down. In this program there was also some money--funding and benefits for relocation. The family that moved would supposedly be paid for moving and given the down-payment to buy or rent in the new location. The problem was that with all the paperwork and communication problems many people were frightened, felt threatened, and they did move. And, of course, the lists were lost and they were never paid, nor did they return to the neighborhood. Many people moved permanently.

Soltren: My family, for example, used to live in the area now known as Castle Square. We were among the first hispanics to arrive in Boston. We moved there before it was built and we were asked to leave, to move away. My mother was promised an apartment when the new housing was completed, but we really just moved out and then moved from place to place, as many people did.

: I see that in the South End there is a lot of renovation, but that the new buildings are all very expensive. Before when people came here, much of the housing was so bad that it had to be knocked down.

C: Yes, and a lot of buildings would have been knocked down again but we asked the B.R.A. to salvage as many buildings as possible. The more housing the better. This all took place during the organizational meetings of I.B.A. in 1967. It happened with the help of a number of organizations, St. Stephens Church was one group for instance. And one of the greatest organizers at that time was a man named Israel Feliciano who went from house to house to speak with the neighbors so that we could organize and make our voices heard.

: I understand that you'll make a library of pictures which show Boston before and after renovation.

C: Yes. We wanted to show the photographs to future generations so that they could see the whole process.

: What services does the I.B.A. have to offer?

C: IBA has three main components. The first is the Human Services where we provide services for the elderly, counselling services, community organization, and recreational programs. We even run a small clinic with the cooperation of some other agencies. The clinic is a free service of IBA. One of the most amazing things about it is that we service so many people who are not Spanish speaking. They are not Hispanics and yet they are coming to the clinic which is being run very efficiently. It's almost as if you might say "the tortilla is turning over." We also have the children's program which is the cultural extension of IBA, known as AREITO. We bring young children in and, starting with the very young, we teach them to develop a sense of identity and self-awareness. We feel that the most important part of the community is to be aware of, sure of and proud of what we are. So we start with the very young children, teaching them in programs like painting, photography, music, dance, theatre, teaching them their identity through the arts.

: Is this only for the Hispanic children?

C: No. There is also a minority of North American children, too, who come voluntarily. Also, remember the reality of the situation is that in the Puerto Rican community some of us speak Spanish and some of us speak only English. You must work with that reality. The programs are worked out in such an informal atmosphere to allow for that difference. It's an open classroom where children--Spanish, Cuban, American, Puerto Rican--can communicate openly and freely in whatever learning style they prefer.

: Danny [Soltren], are you involved in I.B.A. in all of these programs?

S: Well, as of now I will have to be, as Director. Until now I had been operating mainly in the Housing Division on the project "Casas Borinquen," which will really be off on its way this Tuesday; the money has arrived and all's been cleared to begin the project.

: It is a huge project with diverse components to it, including the renovation and rehabilitation of old buildings as well as the construction of new housing. Danny, how is it all operated? Who is in charge of giving out all those new homes? How are they assigned? Managed?

S: Well, the Management is in charge of assigning housing to all those neighbors who are living in the poorest areas of the neighborhood.

: Are there any cases of people from this area moving back into the city?

C: Well, that hasn't happened yet. One of the promises of IBA from the beginning was to build housing in stages and relocate in that area. We are completing the houses on Tremont Street now and the people are moving in. Now we're on Villa Victoria and whn it's completed the people will be going in there who originally lived in that section of the parcel. That would be for the people on Pembroke Street. Many are people whose family has grown and need larger units of housing. But, basically, Villa Victoria will be for the people living in the parcel right now. Then there should be some room later for the people who moved out in '67-'68 to move back in if they want. But right now, we are still working on this step and it's almost filled. When that is complete we will demolish the rest of the buildings on Pembroke Street and reconstruct. Then those people and all the others will move back in.

: I understand that you had a community-run fiesta and people came from all over for it. Not just those from the neighborhood, but those from all around in honor of the celebration of the Fiesta of the tower (plaza) had come. It had become something famous.

S: It has become almost a Patron Saint's festival. Like the ones we celebrate in Puerto Rico. Of course, it is not quite the same as the fiesta of a pueblo on the island. This is the South End, and we are recreating the idea of a fiesta of one whole community here in Boston.

: That was something quite interesting. I discovered in my investigation of the community and about I.B.A., that so many of the residents were from one certain pueblo on the island of Puerto Rico.

S: Yes. The first families to arrive to this neighborhood were from the pueblo of Aguadilla.

C: Which brings up another interesting point, and that is that the names of the streets in Villa Victoria--that three definite streets we have planned so far--are going to be called Paseo of Aguadilla, Paseo of San Juan, and Paseo of Borinquen.

: I understand that one of the new buildings is called "Tower of Unity." Who will live there?

S: It is housing for the elderly and the handicapped. Although it is under the direction and control of the B.H.A., I.B.A. manages it.

C: It's a unique program--since we have our older people living here, as well as some who are incapacitated; some who like to get out, walk around; and then others who are unable due to age or other problems. Then there are many young people around who are active, talented, creative and like to participate. They are not all Puerto Ricans, but are an assorted group of people who are pretty much surrounded in this area by the Puerto Rican community. The majority, however, are not Hispanic, which makes it all very interesting for everybody.

: And yet you provide services for all of these people, which is just fantastic! Danny, what are some of the plans you have for the future of I.B.A.?

S: Well, we'd like to complete the construction of housing which is the next step for the community. Then we hope to get under way an economic development program for the people in the parcel and continue the management plan.

: One of the people who have been involved from the very start of the program has been Concepcion Acevedo. He was one of the founders of the community action program and one of the original tenants. Could you tell us, Sir, has this area changed very much since you first came here?

Acevedo: Oh, there have been enormous changes! When I came here it was all old houses--you can't imagine the difference since then. There's new construction, new houses.

: You've been one of the outstanding workers involved with first the E.T.C. and then I.B.A. Could you tell us a bit about how you got involved with this?

A: I got involved through one of my friends at E.T.C., Israel Feliciano, who was from the same pueblo that I was--the pueblo of Aguadilla. He invited me to go from house to house with him to talk to the people and to get them involved.

: And do you like the way things are going now and the way things are being run?

A: Oh, I'm more and more content every day!

: Can you tell us, Luz, how the I.B.A. is run? Who controls it?

C: Well, I.B.A. is managed through a community congress, partly the original founders of the group. I.B.A. is what you would call the dueño, or the owner of much of the property. The tenants of this property comprise the congress of the community. Then there are elections. We started by having a small party or gathering every month, then of course the development was going very slowly. But as we got things going, we eventually got around to having more serious meetings. The congress was formed and a board of directors was elected from the community congress--fifteen members in all. The board names or appoints five of the actual fifteen members to be able to retain enough control of the organization without relinquishing neighborhood control and without discriminating against B.H.A. tenants like those in Unity Tower and those residents of West Newton Street. The President of I.B.A. is Jose Garcia, the Vice President is Tonia Marrero. The Secretary is Danny's wife who is a very dynamic person, Nilda Vasquez. The Treasurer is Suzie Halligan. Those are the main office-holders at I.B.A.

Interview with Danny Soultrain of IBA

Interviewer: What is the function of this agency with respect to housing for the hispanic population in Boston?

Soultrain: It was an alternative to a problem existing at the time when the agency was put together. There were a set of conditions at the moment such as the fact that urban renewal was coming in. Also, a lot of people with money were moving into the area. The Spanish-speaking community was being displaced. This agency was formed in order to protect the interests of the Spanish-speaking community in the area.

The 1965 Boston Redevelopment Authority's (BRA) plan for the Parcel 19 area completely eliminated the whole hispanic community. As a result, back in 1966, the Emergency Tenants Council (ETC) was formed as a grass roots housing organization to challenge the BRA. They claimed, "We're not going to move. This is our area and we should have the right to be developers of this area for housing." Consequently, after a series of demonstrations and arguments with the city and the BRA, the Parcel 19 area was tentatively designated to the ETC for them to act as developers. What we are doing is, instead of just providing apartments and having the tenants apply to the city housing authority for any existing housing facilities in the area, we try to develop our own housing to meet the existing needs. That includes not only building new housing but rehabilitating existing housing. At this moment we have rehabilitated one project and we have another project in the process of construction right now. We have built a high-rise elderly housing tower and at the moment are waiting to get some financing on a second rehabilitation project. We are also working on our second phase of reconstruction.

The BRA had proposed a series of ugly high-rise unit buildings for the area. They weren't even considering the hispanic community as future tenants for these projects.

At this point we felt that we didn't want these projects so we looked for other alternatives. We came up with the proposal for the projects we have been working on. Currently we manage over 400 units of housing. That is another phase of the program. We are involved in management. We have control of the project after it is built and control of the tenant selection process and the type of people who will come in to manage the facilities. Instead of just building the housing and having an outside agency take over the management, we do it. Other projects in the city have foreclosed because of this.

When we complete the full parcel assembly we will be managing over one thousand units of housing. Having had the experience in dealing with housing in a particular area, perhaps in the future we can expand to help the general hispanic community in the general Boston area. Right now however, we are concentrating on this area because it is a very long process.

It has taken us five years to put together this "Vivienda Space One" site which is in the process of being built now. It take longer to process the applications for funds for a project than it does to actually build a project.

We are now working on the second rehabilitation phase. We've been working on it for two years. We were almost ready. We were closing the deal. All the necessary city, state, and federal codes were met. We were ready to start the actual rehabilitation when New York just happened to go under, which rolled over to other states and the Mass. Housing Finance Agency, from whom we were seeking financing for this project, was unable to sell bonds. This means we have to wait. We are still waiting to see if things clear up so that they can sell their bonds adn we can be financed.

: How is this agency funded?

S: We are mostly privately funded by various foundations and the United Way. We have been able to avoid federal funding thus far which gives us a great deal of autonomy.

The housing development itself is not funded. What we do is use city, state, and federal programs and get mortgages. Our first development on West Newton Street was funded by Eternity program, which is in fact the Boston Housing Authority. What they do is, upon your written request for a rehabilitation project, accept or reject it. Once they've accepted it, the agreement is that you build it, then they buy it from you. However, there are contracts known as Turn Key Two and Turn Key Three that give you management rights over the development.

The Turn Key Towers is a similar program. It is for elderly housing. Our first rehabilitation is a 236 federal program which is an inter-subsidy program which means that they will pay the difference between one percent and whatever the market rate is. Thus you are getting an interest subsidy rather than a leasing, which makes it more feasible to build housing at a lower cost and to rent to low and moderate income people. That we own. The "Vivienda Space One" is also a 236 subsidy program. In fact it was one of the last 236 projects that was approved after the moratorium.

With Casas Boricuas, which is a rehabilitation project I've been working on for the past two years, we're going to the state for funding. What the state does is to sell bonds at a lower rate. Thus it's able to finance projects at a lower interest rate than a bank would.

: What prompted this trend towards massive rehabilitation?

S: The South End is becoming very sophisticated. A lot of families began moving into the area because of the eighteenth century Victorian row houses which are now considered historical sites. People are buying them, preserving them, and returning them to their original state. In a few years the house that was worth five to ten thousand dollars is now worth forty to fifty thousand. That's just the shell, without any rehabilitative work done.

In Dorchester the housing stock is different. They have some good housing stock but it isn't considered historical. The South End also has the added attraction of being very close to downtown Boston and having easy access to most of the major arteries of transportation.

: What do you consider the major accomplishments of this agency?

S: Our housing projects. We have something like seventy to one hundred units in our first development. The Tower is two hundred and one units. The project I'm working on now, "Vivienda's One," is 181.

Casas Boricuas, which is still waiting to be restarted, will have thirty-six units. Vivienda Space Two, which is still in the planning process, will provide 220 units. The work that is completed was done in the last seven years. We still have about three hundred units to complete.

: What do you think have been the major failures of this agency?

S: I don't think the failures are due to the agency. I don't think we have failed. I think it's the inability of the city, state, and federal programs to operate. There is so much red tape, so many restrictions. We have to deal with the state, with building codes and zoning only to mention a few. Only the processing of applications for development take quite some time. It takes a minimum of twelve months to process an application through HUD or through the state. To actually get into construction again takes another period of time.

So I don't think we have failed because with things like the state being unable to seel their bonds and the federally declared moratorium, what could we do? We could have gone to private agencies for financing but then we would be building housing for the wealthy instead of for the low and middle income people.

: Can you assess the community involvement and/or awareness of this agency/

S: The board is made up of all "grass roots" people. It is a community board. The people have a lot to do with our projects and they make a lot of the decisions.

: Does this agency interact with other agencies in the area?

S: Yes. HOPE oversees all the hispanic agencies. The agencies as a whole do have tight communication. They are aware of what we are doing and we of what they are doing.

: What effect has this agency had in changing the laws?

S: HUD gives 20-30 percent subsidy and we needed a forty percent subsidy. Through our lobbying and other political plays, we were able to extend the percentage nationwide to forty percent. We were able to stop the BRA's plans for the area and institute our own.

: What existing laws would you like to see changed?

S: I would like to see more housing programs come into existence either through through the federal or state program. I think the federal government has an obligation to fulfill its 1968 goal. It was to build a certain number of units of housing. All of a sudden they put a stop to it. They never did reach their goal. By cutting down their programs, they seriously crippled the housing development sector. Not only in the low and moderate income level but in the private market also.

: What is the policy that deals with the resettlement procedure for the purpose of redevelopment?

S: Basically, the BRA does the relocating but we try to keep a record of the tenants who moved out of the area so that they can have first preference for the new units available. Years ago, when a building was to be demolished you had to move on your own and find your own place. In 1965, however, the resettlement benefits were instated.

With new construction we will, hopefully, have enough housing for the families that will be moved out. They will be able to move into the newly built high-rise and then we will be able to rehabilitate and reconstruct the housing in that area. We should not have any problem with relocation.

: What exactly was the situation in Parcel 19 that prompted the formation of the ETC (now known as IBA)?

S: In 1965 the Urban Renewal Act called for middle to high income housing in the South End of Boston. The poor people had to move out and had no place to go. They, as a tenants' organization, organized what was known as "Tent City."

This was a peaceful form of protest. All of the families that were being forced to relocate moved to Columbus Avenue and set up tents and lived there. Through this and other demonstrations, we were able to secure our area. We are now redeveloping, but it is being done to benefit the low income tenants.

: What has been the attitude of government agencies and officials towards the work being done by this agency?

S: It varies from individual to individual and from agency to agency. There are some that think it's great, yet there are some who couldn't do enough to stop this type of program.

The Massachusetts Housing and Finance Agency requires that housing units be evenly distributed--25% low income, 25% moderate income, 25% middle income, 25% high income. I feel that combining all of the income brackets will not work. It may work in the South End in the future.

There 's one good aspect about the South End; there is no need to make efforts to racially balance it. In the South End there are hispanics, Greeks, Italians, Indians, Chinese, Blacks, and just about any other nationality that is represented in Boston.

: How do you feel about the available demographic information on the hispanic community?

S: I find them to be very deceiving. The reason is that hispanic families are very transient. There is also the factor of migration that causes a large and rapidly changing fluctuation in the actual state of things.

: What is the single greatest problem facing Hispanics in the area of housing?

S: Having enough adequate housing for the existing population. That is the problem that we're working with now.

: To what extent is the problem that the available facilities aren't large enough to accommodate the extended family?

S: We are now trying to develop housing with four to six bedrooms. Most developers don't take that into consideration when they are constructing new housing. It is cheaper to build units with one or two bedrooms. It's cheaper for operation. The rent of two two-bedroom units is less than one four-bedroom unit. The difference is a lot. When you build a six room unit, you take up the space of two room units but you are not getting the same money as if you were renting three two-bedroom units instead of one six-room unit. The cost of construction is also higher.

: There seems to be a problem of overcrowding and a shortage of units. Is it a question of there not being enough low-income housing or is it that too many of the available units are inoperable due to damage?

S: Too many of the available units were not built with low-income, large families in mind. The housing that we are planning though does have large units.

: How could you compare the low-income housing in Boston to the housing these people left in their homeland?

S: It is very difficult to say, because housing is a very different thing here than it is in Puerto Rico. For example, the environment is very different. What might not be luxurious housing but adequate in Puerto Rico, can be done by very simple means. It cannot be done here. Our nature, on the island, is an outdoor nature. Over here you are enclosed most of the time. You have the cold weather, the high-rise buildings, and the lack of open space. I would say that it is a disappointment. Therefore, the planning of a community is very crucial. Planning must involve open spaces to give a semblance of ethnic roots.

: In what specific area in Boston do low-income Hispanics tend to concentrate?

S: When migration first started, the South End was the place where most of the Puerto Ricans came. After urban renewal began, the Hispanic population decreased significantly. They started moving to North Dorchester, Roxbury, Jamaica Plain, Mattapan, and other surrounding areas. Right now, however, I would say that Dorchester has the highest Hispanic population. Second to that would be Roxbury, then Jamaica Plain.

: Do you feel that the reason for the original concentration in the South End was the availability of housing?

S: The rents were very low and the housing was available, but, also, the fact that the first few families to settle in Boston settled here attracted other Hispanics.

The fact that it is close to the downtown district and places of employment also made it very atrractive, not only to the Puerto Ricans but to all the other groups migrating to Boston.

: With a rise in income, do they tend to move away from these areas of low-income concentration?

S: That depends on the family. But you see very few families that do succeed well enough to have the option. This is a very young community in comparison to New York or Chicago.

: Is there a ceiling stipulation on income for eligibility for low-income housing?

S: Yes. They are governed by the federal, state, and city. They always have very strict requirements.

: What are the cultural aspects that affect housing?

S: In Puerto Rico there is a very close relationship between exterior and interior. The only difference between the two is a roof. We are outwardly oriented people. So we are trying to make our units outwardly oriented by using open space. I'm not so sure that after a certain point housing is universal. There is a certain amount of cultural impact which affects design. We have the "Plaza Bentansas," which is designed after a Puerto Rican plaza. We are renaming the streets after Puerto Rican people and places.

: How do you think identifying with Puerto Rico will affect assimilation?

S: I think people will tend to relate more to the community as their own. It has a mental effect on people. I think the people will take care of the housing and the area more because they will feel like a part of it, instead of just existing there. There will be ties there.

The Hispanic population in the United States is very transient. They need to develop roots and settle somewhere and to organize. This may tend to make this area desirable. Every minority has its section with cultural ties and this will hopefully be ours.

: What is the effect of cultural identification and unity on the non-Hispanic residents in the South End?

S: I think it will give them a sense of our culture. I think that it will break the existing prejudices. Interaction of culture will develop pride. We have "Latorre de Unidad" which is elderly housing and it is fairly well integrated. They celebrate the holidays of every nationality represented. We had the first "Fiesta Bebanzas" and they're doing their bit. Even though it was a Puerto Rican cultural event, it had the input of every ethnic group represented in the Parcel 19 area.

: How are tenant unions set up in Hispanic neighborhoods?

S: I helped organize one organization which was in an area of substandard housing. We organized our own housing. Three of us divided the block into three sections and got the people together.

: Do you feel that tenant unions are functional?

S: Yes, I do.

: Do you get a constant active participation from the tenants?

S: I think that when you organize and focus on the issues that word will get around and you will get participation. Through this interaction you get a more together neighborhood. I think people are tired of existing conditions.

Where other programs have failed is that they have always tried to organize the problem. They organize the unemployed, the drug addicts, the drunkards--they pump money into the problem. That is the problem that skims the surface. I think that the problems should be tackled at the core. They should organize the "family" (meaning community). It may seem to take longer, but in the long run it really doesn't.

This agency is one of the few that seems to be moderately successful. The Hispanic Movement (Movimiento Hispano) is an agency which serves the North Dorchester/Roxbury area. It is very much needed but not successful.

Interview with Jorge Hernández
of HOPE

Interviewer: How are you involved with housing for the Spanish-speaking in Boston?

Hernández: I am Senior Planner for Community Development Housing Act of 1974. In 1975, I organized meetings to inform the Hispanic residents of Boston about funds available for purchasing homes and repairing them.

At these meetings, tenants would bring proposals which would be reviewed, modified if necessary, voted on, and, if accepted, enacted.

: What do you view as the major problem concerning housing for the Hispanic population of Boston?

H: Poverty is clearly the main problem. Also the location and condition of these areas seem to be a problem. There is a high crime rate in these areas. Unemployment is clearly a problem because with income one cannot pay for the necessities of daily living, along with these there are social class problems, and legal problems.

The housing stock is run-down due to lack of money. The available housing is inadequate in size to accommodate the large families, thus over-crowding is also a problem. New housing is built according to the average-size family. This being three-four-five room apartments. These again are too small for Hispanic families because of their custom of the extended family.

Provision is made for large families by the federally subsidized housing program. In Boston, as of 1973, there were approximately fifteen thousand units of public housing --only seven had seven rooms. The strict limit on funds also poses a problem.

: What programs have been enacted by this agency to date to deal with this problem?

H: There is a home ownership program on Dudley Street to start in May or June, 1976. It will allow moderate-income families to get aid to buy houses, repair them, and rent them to low-income families.

Interview with Emilio Figueroa

of the Hispanic Movement

Interviewer: What is the function of this agency?

Figueroa: We try to work exclusively with the problems of housing. However, because we are a neighborhood oriented agency, we do our best in dealing with other problems such as social and educational problems. For example, in September there are always the problems that come with starting school. This year we had problems due to the re-zoning laws.

We also deal with health questions. This is one that coincides with the problems of housing. We have a lot of cases of lead poisoning. We work on this in conjunction with the Boston City Hospital. They draw the blood and implement treatment. We contact the landlords. Through the offices of Legal Aid we try to put pressure on the landlords.

: Do you work in conjunction with other agencies?

F: Yes. We refer legal problems to the Legal Aid offices, financial problems to the Welfare offices, health problems to the city hospital, and other free clinics, and educational problems to the specific schools involved. We try to deal with necessary agencies because we have no funding so we don't have an adequate staff to deal with problems directly.

We deal with problems of housing. If someone is being unjustly evicted, if a tenant feels his apartment is in substandard condition, if he feels the rent is too high, we try to intercede between the landlord and the tenant and try to reach some agreement.

We also try to locate apartments when someone comes to us for help. We file applications for people with the Boston Housing Authority.

When there are fires in the area we take care of those left homeless. We take them to the Red Cross and the necessary agencies for financial assistance.

: When was this agency founded?

F: September 30, 1969.

: How is this agency funded?

F: We work voluntarily. There is a church that pays for the building, electricity, and heat. They go under the name of

Metropolitan Cooperative.

: What, do you feel, is the general attitude of the Hispanic population in this area about the present housing situation?

F: The housing problem is the number one problem in the area because there is no housing available. A great part of the Hispanic population in this area is living under the worst housing conditions and they have no hope of moving to a better unit because there is no construction going on for which they could qualify. The construction and rehabilitation that is being done is inadequate because construction costs are high, therefore rents are high and most of the Hispanics in this area cannot afford them. There is, of course, the possiblity of getting a rent supplement, but they are so difficult to get and are often times so small that it would make living in these new units very difficult financially if not impossible.

Another great problem in this community is the frequent occurrence of disastrous fires. Practically every day families in this area are left homeless. The situation has gotten so bad that nothing is treated as an emergency by the Office of Public Housing. Now anyone who applies for emergency housing is added to a list of families awaiting units. Many times I have had entire families housed in this office for weeks while I tried to find a suitable apartment for them.

Things have gotten better in other areas such as the South End where there is new construction. They f-el, and justifiably so, that the new units available should go to the families displaced by the demolition done on that site as well as families displaced by demolition for new construction.

Out of all the areas with heavy Hispanic population concentration, this area--Roxbury/Dorchester--is in the worst condition. There is a great Hispanic population here and we find that to be also a part of the growing problem. Most Hispanics have low incomes, thus they are relegated to substandard housing because it is all they can afford.

: What have been the major accomplishments of this agency?

F: We initiated the program against lead poisoning. Doctors would come here from Boston City Hospital and draw the blood samples, take them back to the lab, and call us with the results. We would contact the patients, and oftentimes, transport them to the hospital ourselves. The program rapidly grew to a size that this office could not handle. It was then transferred to the hospital where it is now.

We still have in our back office the equipment we were using to detect lead in the paint on apartment walls. The city now does the tests and the instruments they use are far more advanced than what we have.

We had six Vista volunteers who worked with us on this project, but they are no longer with us. We could have Vista volunteers now but we really don't want them because the pay is too low and mature family-men cannot work for the sixty-three dollars-a-week salary they offer.

: What are the most frequent problems that are brought to this office?

F: The major problem is the condition of the existing housing units. Sometimes tenants protest their high rents due to substandard conditions and we have to take the case either to the rent control board or to the housing court. There is another problem that often arises at this point and that is that when we, either through one of the afore-mentioned courts or personally, approach the landlord we find that he claims that it would be too costly to repair the building. He cannot afford it. If the tenants don't like it, they can move out.

When winter sets in we get complaints about lack of heating. This is from old faulty heating systems that are so far gone that they need to be replaced. But again the landlord cannot afford the necessary replacement or repairs. Oftentimes, we find that landlords will do minimal repair work when it's time to collect rent. The tenants have heat for a week or so and then the system breaks down again.

There is a problem of ignorance of the law. Many times tenants threaten to hold back their rent until the necessary repairs are made and they carry out the threat illegally. If they came to us, we would get someone to inspect the building and file a formal legal list of the violations of the housing code. Then through the housing court, the tenant can withhold the rent by paying the rent to someone in the Legal Aid Office. This rent is deposited in the bank and the tenant receives receipts for his rent. When the landlord tries to evict the tenant, which is what usually ensues, the tenant with a legal representative from the Legal Aid Office, go to court with proof of inspection, violations, and receipts for the rent which the landlord will collect as soon as the violations are corrected. Many tenants come to us, after illegally withholding rent, with eviction notices which give them fourteen days to move out. In those cases we have to do our best to rush the process to avoid the eviction of the tenant.

In this office we offer orientation classes but the response is poor. We had a case about three years ago with a landlord that owned two apartment houses. The tenants withheld their rent for one year. The buildings had been inspected quite a few times. He took the case to court a few times and the court decided in favor of the tenants every time. They had lived in the buildings for eight to ten years and they had been very prompt with their rent as long as the building was in good condition, but once it broke down and the landlord refused to respond to their repeated calls for repairs, they withheld the rent through legal procedures. Eventually the tenants found new apartments, collected the rents they had banked through Legal Aid and the buildings now vacant had to be demolished.

Actual evictions or even threatened evictions are rare problems. Maybe two or three a year. But complaints of substandard conditions and newly arrived families from Puerto Rico looking for low-income housing we see everyday.

Once in a while, we find that there are apartments available that a low-income family could afford but the landlords set the stipulation of "No Children."

: Do you feel that there is an effort being made by the government officials to tackle the problem of housing in Boston?

F: I think that very little is being done. There is no new public housing under construction. The city government has the power to intervene in private housing stock but they are very slow in doing so. They take weeks sometimes to respond to our request for an inspection of a building. I imagine they are doing something, because everytime I call to try to rush a case they claim there are hundreds before mine. It could be that there are very few employees. They have had extensive budget cuts and this was one of the areas that suffered greatly. I feel that they are doing something. However, they aren't doing enough.

: To what extent do you feel that the culture of Hispanics relates to their present living conditions?

F: I feel that income is more a factor than any cultural aspect. When I first came to the United States, I thought that if you didn't speak the language you got poor housing. But now I realize that no matter what language you speak, you get the apartment if you have the money. The problem is more a matter of there not being enough housing available rather than any cultural aspect.

The culture does come into play when we look at the fact that the Hispanic likes to live where other Hispanics live. That can, at times, be a handicap because having, nearby, people with whom to converse in Spanish makes learning English more difficult.

: When an Hispanic family has a rise in income, do they tend to leave this area?

F: Yes. When they begin adapting to the new way of life and get better jobs, they immediately move to a better area. I feel that the Hispanic people, like anyone else, like to progress. But many times the situation doesn't permit it.

I was once asked, "Why do Hispanics tend to move around a lot?" I feel that Hispanics, particularly the Puerto Ricans, like to move to new frontiers in search for a better life. Many times they will settle for a few years and decide suddenly that they would like to see Florida, then they just pack up, sell everything, and move there. I tend to feel that it has to do with culture.

: How do you view the future of this agency?

F: We will have to close eventually. We have no funds and many times we are in need of supplies and we can't afford them. This agency counts on donations and they aren't coming in. I feel that this agency provides a necessary function and this neighborhood needs it, but many people don't see the need.

When families are put out and we aren't here, where will they go?

A few days ago a friend of mine told me of a lady who had moved here from New Jersey trying to contact a friend who isn't here any longer. She was sleeping with her five children.

I went to check it out and it was true. I brought her to stay here for a few days and worked with the Boston authorities and we found her an apartment in Columbia Point.

Without us here, there could have been a fire or something and God knows what she would have done.

: How do you view the future of the housing situation?

F: I feel that only a sudden surge of new construction can make things better. The demand is growing constantly and there just isn't enough housing.

Interview with Ted Mallen

of Alianza Hispana

Interviewer: What is the function of this agency with respect to housing for the hispanic population of Boston?

Mallen: As of this year it has changed. Right now it is in an extremely dynamic state. The only two professionals on the staff are Luis Seoan and myself. I am an architect and Luis is the Housing Personnel Coordinator. Luis handles what we would call the tenant base. When people need apartments, particularly those on welfare, he helps them. Right now, that's practically a dead-end street because in this area, the North Dorchester-Roxbury area, that I call the Dudley Street Corridor, there is a critical shortage of low income apartments.

This office, the Office of Community Development, is just over four weeks old. I came on board here on January 26, 1976. We are starting a new program this year and it is probably going to incorporate the Housing Office. The active program is the tenant base housing. I am in the course of developing an extensive alternative program which involves the abandonment of buildings and what can be done with them in the form of the Home-ownership and Rehabilitation Program, which we call "HORP". We are trying to get Spanish-speaking families to buy rehabilitated houses. Through this office, we help them by arranging financing. We go to banks and try to loosen up things in terms of the money being available. Then we are going to do the design work and the contract negotiation with the contractor and the project oversight. We hope to do fifteen buildings this year in this immediate area by January '77. That is an ambitious project. I would be satisfied with ten.

Other than that, we have a planning phase. Knowing that the tenant base situation is critical, not merely because the Boston Housing Authority is doing such a lousy job right now, but because there is a vast shortage of buildings in this area. Many buildings have recently been demolished. The reason for this is that it becomes infected when abandoned. The city consideres it unhealthy and has no way to get it off its tax load. They abandon the property and rip down the buildings. There aren't that many buildings left that are suitable for rehabilitation because most of what was abandoned has been torn down by the city in this particular area.

If we can rehabilitate buildings in areas that are just beginning to go, we would be taking a solid step in the right direction. Our aim is in finding abandoned houses to rehabilitate and offer them for sale to hispanic individuals. There is a very big political problem in the city, political in a mathematical sense and in that there is a large, primarily Puerto Rican, population in this area (generally hispanic let's say) who have come here recently (since 1968). They don't vote. They don't own property, and consequently, they have very little impact on the city. The city does not listen to people who do not vote. They hold no weight over their heads. Because they don't own property they don't pay taxes and that is another strike against them. What we want to do is to let them develop roots here so that the city cannot turn its head away from them in terms of this office.

: When was this agency founded?

M: The agency was founded in 1971.

: How is the agency funded?

M: We're funded by H.E.W., Community Development Block Grant, H.U.D., and some private organizations.

: How do you view the future of this agency?

M: I view the future of this agency as improving. With this office as a start, we can establish a developmental base in this area, then we can establish a power base. There is money for development and where money is moving there is power. It's a simple equation. Not power in an arrogant or aggressive sense, but power in a subsistence sense. It may mean that we can become independent of outside agencies. We can become autonomous. We're also moving to a new building, which will be a great asset.

: How is this agency staffed?

M: I am the only person on staff who is not bilingual and I am becoming bilingual. I am learning Spanish--that is a prerequisite. My position is a fairly highly technical position. It's a combination of architecture and planning. The salaries are not exorbitant so we don't attract the cream of the crop. We look for people who are willing to work hard and who fulfill the demands of the position. There are social service positions, teaching positions, youth advocacy workers who are like big brothers and sisters, myself and then there are the professional positions such as the director.

: Can you assess the community involvement and/or awareness of this agency?

M: My assessment of the community involvement and awareness of this agency is that it exists but that it is not extensive enough to have impact. One thing that holds back this organization is that we're being funded by outside agencies, and the funding is minimal. Another major drawback is that we don't have a big enough impact on the area. Not enough people are involved. I throw the blame on the other people. There are just a lot of apathetic people around. That is a big problem because they might not be pulling the neighborhood down, even though in some cases they are, but they are not lifting it up and it really needs that. If they don't have a particular problem bearing on their shoulders, they tend to ignore the outside organizations that could help them.

The other problems are in our hands. I don't think that we have a strong enough mechanism to tie us to the neighborhood. We have to have a good rapport with Spanish-speaking store owners and the churches. We have to be active on the street. They have to see you and know who you are and where you are from. Then you begin to broaden your net of communication. There is a big question working within this agency in respect to our communications network. That being "Does it exist?" I don't believe it does. The organization reacts to situations as they occur. Up until Ms. Angeles came on board (two weeks before I did), this agency did not plan. She is a top-knotch person. She is a very good planner. She has just hired someone to handle public relations. She is willing to listen to people--hence I foresee change.

: Does this agency interact with other agencies in the area?

M: Yes. We have meetings with other agencies and talk about what we're doing and about what they're doing. I don't think we have enough inter-agency programatic interaction. I don't think we do things with the Cardinal Cushing Center directly.

In terms of community development, I intend to change that. I will be meeting with people from other agencies all I can.

In terms of this land use, plan proposal that we are trying to evolve, we were just talking this morning about bringing other agencies from the area in. I am very receptive to that. I think it is really necessary. We need to have an impact on the area. Nobody can be so egotistical as to think that their agency can have an impact by itself, including the city of Boston. Everyone has to work with each other because that is the more man power, the more impact.

: What specific problems do you run into while working to rehabilitate these buildings.

M: Legal problems with rehabilitation are non-existent. I think that the city has done just about everything it can to encourage this type of project. The big problems are the banks and the construction costs--money problems. The banks don't like to let money go out in this area. It is called red-lining. It is illegal but it also is intangible, so we can't depend on the court.

: What laws would you like to see changed and why?

M: I wouldn't like to see laws changed; I would like to see policy changed. If I want to get an FHA insured mortgage, it takes FHA three months to respond. That is the standard process. It means that if I want to start a building and I get my client in February, get him through the bank by March, FHA is going to take three months before I can begin to design and construct the building. That's one big problem in front of me right now. If we have to go to FHA for these fifteen buildings this year, then we have a problem because we'd have a three-month delay that we have no time for and that is going to put us into late August or September before we start construction. It is that kind of policy that I would like to see changed. It is bureaucracy and too much red tape that is not necessary. Another policy is red-lining. Red-lining put this area where it is and will keep it there. With Boston I do not have too many other problems as of yet. In fact, I have found that there is a lot of freedom to work, to do things in Boston.

: What is the law or policy that deals with the resettlement procedure for the purpose of redevelopment?

M: I think our policy is to temporarily relocate those people, possibly in public housing, while the building is rehabilitated. And then, if at all possible, they would get priority as tenants. I say "if at all possible" because there are some complications. For example, the rents. Some of the tenants staying in the HUD foreclosed properties which we will be working on (I understand, though I am not sure) aren't paying rent. HUD does not put any pressure on them because by having people there the building is a little safer in terms of vandalism, fires, etc. If these people are what we call "squatters," non-rent payers, then they have to be dealt with in terms of "fork-up the money." If they can not come up with the rent, we still provide low-cost housing for people who need it. It is not the problem like what happened in the South End where all that was low-income housing is now young professional housing. We are not moving anybody out of the area. If they cannot come up with the rent, they might end up in public housing. But I don't find that to be an inequitable solution.

Everywhere that traditional 1960's redevelopment has occurred we find the whole urban renewal idea. This being the grand scope of modernization. It can't happen any more. We have to progress beyond the idea that a new surface is the right surface. One that works for the people is the right surface and that's what we have to make work here.

: What has been the attitude of government agencies and officials towards the work being done by this agency?

M: For the most part, I think, very good. I think that in the past there has not been enough professional staff to develop extremely professional approaches to problems so they've been somewhat para-professional. However, any proposal that comes out of the Office of Community Development from here on is going to be an extremely concise, well-delivered proposal. I think that relationship to the government agencies will be more favorable at that time. If we impress them, then they move if you don't. It is as simple as that.

: What is the single greatest problem facing the Hispanics in the area of housing?

M: Underemployment (people not looking for jobs). We have a particularly unique sociological situation. The unemployment is seven percent; the underemployment is sixty percent. This creates problems. It is also an alternative lifestyle that has to be looked at seriously. I'd say that that is one of the greatest single problems because without employment there is no capital; without capital we don't upgrade the housing. Something has to be done.

Another serious problem would be the amount of demolition that has been done. I think that if people had more money, there wouldn't have been as much abandonment.

There is a lack of motivation, know-how, and money. This brings us back to the banks. Banking is a big problem facing the Spanish in the area of housing right now. It is three-sided. There aren't jobs, but given the jobs, people don't get motivated to take them, so they're not going to get the money to loosen up the bank. Red-lining, I consider a big problem. However, it didn't just pop up. Bankers studied the situation from a business standpoint. In particular areas they redlined because the people in that area were going to be detrimental to mortgages on a gross basis. It has been borne out. The abandonments were FHA-insured mortgages on which the people foreclosed. They could not afford the mortgage. That is the proof for the redlining case. We can't work that way because if we do, things fall apart. Bankers never associate the fact that their redlining policy is creating the crimes and slums they hear about on the news. They don't make that associative loop, but it is there and we have to start defining it.

: To what extent is the problem that the available facilities are not large enough to accommodate the extended family?

M: It is a serious problem. If we can get into a subsidized development role, we would encourage a different type of housing. When you break a building up, you don't break it up just into one and two unit apartments because there are too many families with four to six children. So you have to break it up differently. There are two problems. One is that it hasn't happened in the past. The second is that architecturally the buildings don't lend themselves to that kind of design. In these three-decker buildings with three apartments on each floor, it is very hard--although you may say it's very easy: the family can take one and one-half floors. But when you work it out architecturally, you find that the buildings break horizontally, not vertically, and to make those breaks it would be very expensive, which would mean higher rent which people cannot afford.

: With a rise in income, do the hispanics tend to move away from this area?

M: No, because of filial relations. I was just talking to an hispanic from New York City, and he pointed out to me that because New York City's Puerto Rican population is in its third generation, they have a tendency to be more mobile.

: Is there a ceiling stipulation on low-income housing?

M: I believe there is in public housing. There is a ceiling stipulation on the homesteading program. This is a program where HUD has given some 67-77 foreclosed properties to the city of Boston to give away. They are only doing this in four areas: Jamaica Plain, Mattapan, Dorchester, and Codman Square. These properties are being given away under certain stipulations:

1. The individual taking the building has to occupy it.
2. The individual has to make less than sixteen thousand dollars.
3. The individual has to live there for three years following total rehabilitation.
4. He has to rehabilitate the building within one year.

: What are the cultural aspects that affect housing?

M: The cultural aspects that affect housing are family size and family use of space.

: How do you promote and preserve the effectiveness of community orientation?

M: We have youth activities and educational programs. We will soon begin having social activities because we feel it is important.

: Do you feel that the setting-up of hispanic neighborhoods is an admission that assimilation of hispanics into the mainstream of Boston life is either impossible or undesirable?

M: Absolutely not. It is just an essential step. We don't assimilate in five or ten years. We assimilate over long periods of time.

: Is this agency involved with tenant unions at all?

M: No. However, it is something we are starting to talk about. Tenant unions are obsolete, even though they are recent. They are basically a group of tenants trying to secure their needs against the landlord. What I am in favor of is cooperative tenant organizations, where the tenants eventually take over the management and ownership of the building. I am interested in seeing that GBCD has a proposal in to HUD for a cooperative and we are going to watch the progress of it.

Interview with Mr. and Mrs. P.
and Ms. Olga Santiago

Interviewer: When did your family immigrate to the United States?

Mrs. P.: We arrived in Boston from Puerto Rico on the thirteenth of October, 1975.

: Many immigrant families have found the adjustment of a new country somewhat difficult. I'm sure you must have heard this complaint from other families but have you had any second thoughts of packing up all your belongings and coming to the United States?

Mrs. P.: I had no doubts that the big step we were taking was the right one.

: What were your first few days in Boston like?

Mrs. P.: We initially moved in with my husband's sister's family in Boston. Several weeks after our arrival my sister-in-law found an apartment for my family in the area. But we did not remain for long in the new apartment because our landlord asked us to leave because our welfare payments hadn't been arriving on time and we were unable to pay our rent on the designated date.

: When you were beset by these problems, had you begun to regret your immigration to the United States?

Mrs. P.: Our problems were so overwhelming that at that point I had actually wished we were back in Puerto Rico. My family had actually considered returning to Puerto Rico but I convinced them to stay because I had hopes that our predicament would change.

: After you were asked to leave your apartment, where did you go?

Mrs. P.: We were desperate. We were a family of eleven who had nowhere to go. A man from the church invited us to move in with him and his family until the housing authority could find us adequate housing. But there were six children in addition to him and his wife who occupied one small apartment. My family would never have fit into his place, so it was at that point that we decided that we had no alternative but to move illegally into a vacant apartment in the Mission Hill Project.

: What was the condition of the apartment in the Mission Hill Project? Was it livable?

Mrs. P.: When I first opened the door to the apartment I got sick and wanted to walk out. But we had nowhere else to go, so we cleaned it up and did whatever repairs we could.

: What was your life like in the apartment since you moved in, Mr. P.?

Mr. P.: My wife was constantly worrying that we'd be discovered and she cried a lot. I urged her to pray to God. We were not in this unfortunate situation by choice, we were forced to illegally occupy the apartment.

: I understand you are awaiting the court's decision as to whether you should be allowed to continue to live in the apartment legally. What are your feelings at this point?

Mrs. P.: I haven't been able to think of anything but what the decision will be. Naturally, I'm extremely nervous.

: In addition to the housing predicament which the P. family is in, there are added problems. Mr. P. is a diabetic. As any diabetic knows, Mr. P. should avoid situations which cause stress. Ms. Santiago, I understand that you discovered the P. family's problems and have assisted them in legally procuring the apartment. Do you usually do this type of work?

Ms. Santiago: Yes. I work in the Massachusetts Office of Mental Health in the Spanish Culture Program which is a bilingual program which assists the hispanic community and their problems.

: You have been informed of the court's decision in this family's case, could you share it with us?

S: Judge Garrity has ruled that the family may retain the apartment and recommended that their name be placed on the public housing list.

: When you took the case, did it seem impossible to handle?

S: It certainly did. The situation was almost like a soap opera. I couldn't believe that one family could have so many problems at one time.

: What characteristic did the family possess which made it possible for them to bear the weight of their unfortunate situation?

S: The family has such a strong religious faith which I believe gave them the strength to carry on.

PART V. Social and Political Issues in the Spanish Speaking Community

Interview with Paul Guzzi, Secretary of State
of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 1976.

Interviewer: In recent years legislation has been passed in the Commonwealth dealing with the question of bilingual ballots. There have been complaints about the implementation of this legislation. What efforts are being made to insure that the law is enforced in this area?

Guzzi: We have talked before about the gap that often occurs between a law and its implementation. I think that while the federal was certainly very specific, its application in Massachusetts has been somewhat of a problem. But, as an example of what we've been trying to do in preparation for the March 2nd election, we are supplying the 361 precincts throughout the state with specimen ballots in Spanish. This effort is an attempt to communicate with the Spanish-speaking community. We have also offered, from within our own central services, election workshops in which we try to deal with the whole question of registration, and we also try to communicate with local officials. So much of what is done or what isn't done depends on local officials. And in these ways we've made perhaps the first groping attempt to deal with the problems which the Spanish-speaking community faces.

: For one reason or another it seems that certain laws are ignored or not implemented at all. As a result, the people for whom the law was intended to benefit are not benefiting. For instance, the amendment to the Voting Rights Act says that in states or political subdivisions which have a 5% population of one of the specified language minorities, the ballots and all the information concerning the functioning of the electoral process must be provided in that particular language. It has been admitted by the Census Bureau that their statistics of the Spanish-speaking population had been underestimated. Because of an error committed by a federal agency, the Spanish-speaking community cannot benefit by the Voting Rights Act law. Why do things like this happen?

G: Well, I think you are right to a large degree. There are 2,200 precincts in this state and we have actually gone beyond the law in terms of providing specimen ballots wherever we have felt, and wherever local officials communicated and/or community interest groups indicated, that there was a need to provide specimen ballots in the presidential primary elections. When you talk about the census, it brings to mind the census which we conducted in 1975. One of the things we specifically did was to provide instructions in the language in which community members and individuals would understand it. That went beyond Spanish actually. We provided it in some five different languages. However, it still remains a very real problem. I think, to ultimately deal with it, we should do what the Federal Census Bureau has begun to do. They are conducting a number of seminars across the nation in preparation for the 1980 census. I think the Federal Census Bureau is far more aware than ever before of the need to count particular populations, particularly the Spanish-speaking population.

: The size of the Spanish-speaking community is now estimated around 150,000, statewide. Boston is 10% Spanish-speaking. Springfield is almost 8% Spanish-speaking. Worcester is about 5% and Lawrence is almost 15% Spanish-speaking. This information was obtained from community surveys, taken by the community itself, by government agencies and also by social agencies. My question is, Why doesn't the State do something to bring the figures which we have obtained and the figures of the Federal Census Bureau together? In this way, the Spanish-speaking communities can benefit from the law.

G: Again, because it's a federal law, its implementation depends on the Federal Bureau's census figures. The State is really powerless to add or subtract figures from the Federal Bureau Census results. I think we have tried and actually begun to extend the services of the Secretary of State's office to the Spanish-speaking community. The fact that we have succeeded in providing 30-40% of the precincts with bilingual material this year is an important first indicator of our success with the voter workshops. In the area of registration, we have proposed something that, I think, cuts across many of the problems that not only exist within the Spanish-speaking community but within a number of minority communities. You and I know that the registration system which we now have, even though it is perhaps a step better than the one we had five years ago, really discriminates against a lot of people. What I have proposed is postcard registration. Registration, I feel, is really a big part of the problem, not only within non-English speaking communities but within English-speaking communities. My office has discovered that there are over a million people eligible to register who aren't. And I think that within non-English speaking communities the problem is even greater. We have proposed postcard registration which is, in effect, taking the system that we now have which involves individuals, for the most part, going to city or town halls to register to vote and changing that system so that individuals will be allowed to register just by sending a postcard to the local election officials.

: How would postcard registration affect the Spanish-speaking community? Would there be bilingual postcard registration?

G: Absolutely. Under this system it would be far easier to provide postcards in different languages.

: Concerning registration, approximately a year and a half ago a law was passed in Massachusetts which stated that hispanic applicants could register on Spanish/English forms provided by your office. The forms were to be supplied to local election officials who would, in turn, make them available to hispanic applicants. To this day, many cities and towns are not using them. Can you explain why?

G: All too often we've seen a gap between the goals that the law seeks to establish and its administration. One of the first things that my office did was to insure that the bilingual affidavit for registration was printed and made available in cities and towns throughout the state. We printed about one-hundred thousand and supplied them to the local election officials.

: A previous shipment of fifty thousand forms was never used. It appears to me that not only is this a waste of money, but it is an infringement of the voting rights of a large segment of certain communities.

G: One of the problems is that the Secretary of State is without real power to get the ball rolling and implement these laws.

: Who has this power? What rights do citizens have who feel they have not been allowed to fully exercise their voting rights?

G: The first thing which is important to know is that we're very much aware of the problem and have proposed legislation which will give more power to the Office of Secretary of State in order to enforce compliance with election laws. Currently, this office has to refer all problems to the Attorney General. And, all too often, these kinds of problems don't get priority attention.

However, there is an immediate first step which can be taken. We've established what is called "Citizens Information Service," which is a set of toll-free telephone lines where individuals can be put in contact with the proper state officials. As an adjunct to that, we have just recently established what we're calling a "Voter Assistance Service," which puts people in direct contact with the Secretary of State's Office where a bilingual person will assist Spanish-speaking callers. Ultimately, if somebody is being discriminated against, one either has to go to court and/or to the Attorney General in order to enforce compliance with the law.

: Why did you feel it was necessary to cancel the programs of The Bilingual Information Center which was established by the legislature to assist hispanic citizens, particularly in the area of electoral participation?

G: Well, as a matter of fact, I don't think we've cancelled the programs. I think what we have really done is expanded what was a bilingual information service into a "Citizen Information Service" that deals with a full range of problems which any citizen has concerning the State government. The response to the program has been tremendous.

: A Problem with referring a Spanish-speaking citizen to an expert on his particular question is that the expert usually does not speak Spanish. A service of the Bilingual Information Center was to find Spanish-speaking people who could assist in the particular problem of the Spanish-speaking caller. Is your office now equipped to provide this type of assistance? Can the Spanish-speaking person be referred to someone who can speak his language or will he just be referred to a number?

G: As a matter of fact, as I was just saying, we do have a bilingual individual within our system who specifically deals with the Spanish-speaking community. This person tries to help as much as possible right there on the phone. I think we hit a real problem, especially in 1975-76. There have been drastic cutbacks in the state government. We know that the Governor's office had similar kinds of services which have been done away with completely. Within the restraints of our budget, I think we've been able to do a creditable job. And I think as more members of the community become aware of the service and perhaps as our budget becomes bigger, we will be able to provide, I hope, even more improved services.

A Round Table Discussion of the Changing Role of Hispanic Women in American Society, 1976

Interviewer: All of us here have been raised in different cities, perhaps in different countries, and we inevitably have different views of what a woman is supposed to be. I can remember that I thought a woman was supposed to be the submissive housewife who stayed at home all day to cook, clean, and care for her children. Did you have an impression of what womanhood was?

Charlene: Even though my family sent all of us to school and emphasized the importance of a good education, I still felt that when I became a woman I would marry and raise a beautiful family. I thought I'd make a terrific housewife--cooking, cleaning, and loving my husband and children--and that we'd all live happily everafter in Mexico. But as I matured the importance of a good education became more important to me. I felt a need to further my studies so I came to Boston and prepared for a career. My revised goal in life is to become a dedicated wife and mother who also has her own profession.

: Were you born in the United States? What is the size of your family?

Evelyn: I was born in the United States in a family of six boys and one girl. I was the only female. My mother thought that because I was the only daughter that I should be given the chance for a quality education which would eventually lead to a professional career. My parents wanted me to be able to take care of myself. They were afraid that if I didn't have a good education and became involved with a man and the relationship failed, I wouldn't have anywhere to turn. Choosing a career would make me self-supporting.

Sofia: The role of hispanic women in Latin America today has begun to change. Many more women are becoming aware of the importance of career-oriented education. But there are still many, many more women who are conforming to the traditional role of the hispanic woman who marries and devotes her life to her family. Men are still expected to be the breadwinners. It is a hard tradition to change. But there are those hispanic women who are learning employable skills in case they are needed.

: Charlene, do you feel that as a woman studying in a graduate degree program you are regarded differently than a man in the same situation?

C: Up until this point I haven't discovered any open difference in the way I am regarded in the university. Indirectly I have noticed that some men are actually mystified that I am capable of handling the kind of work they too are doing.

S: Do you believe that the often repeated story that an hispanic woman today is in a very advantageous position to obtain employment at the drop of a hat is true?

E: I'd have to say that where I work that this is probably true.

S: Where do you work?

E: I'm working for the federal government in the Civil Rights Office.

S: Are you involved in any way with any programs about women's organizations?

E: Yes. Right now I am in the process of forming a chapter of the National Women's Conference for Puerto Rican women. The basic aim of the conference will be to develop hispanic women leaders at the local level where they will assist in the needs of the hispanic community.

S: In politics . . . ?

E: Not only in politics but in economics and social affairs.

S: Do you promote the importance of education for women?

E: Education and recognition of women's rights will be two important issues in the conference. However, the chapter still hasn't been formed.

S: Is the chapter limited to Puerto Rican women?

E: The program has been funded especially for Puerto Rican women. But I understand that other Latin women can participate in the organization if they choose.

S: I'm not Puerto Rican; I am interested in the chapter. But it seems as if I've been excluded from the organization.

E: It depends solely on the chapter. In Boston, for example, the majority of Latin women are not Puerto Rican. There are a variety of nationalities. And it wouldn't be fair if the chapter here were limited solely to Puerto Rican women.

: Charlene, where and what are you studying?

C: I'm enrolled in a doctoral program in the department of language and literature at Boston University. My interests are in working directly with the bilingual programs in the Boston area. Currently I'm working in the public school system, organizing programs for Title I programs.

: Do you think that as a woman in a doctoral program you have been taken as seriously as has a man in the same program? A criticism I have heard of women in doctoral programs is that they are not taking their studies seriously. They're only looking for something to do with their leisure time. Do you believe this is true?

C: The director of the program in which I'm studying, Maria Brisk, is a woman who is in charge of many important duties. Everyone in the department has a lot of respect for her. And because of her I think that the men in my department have seen how seriously women take their jobs. I don't believe that they feel our appearance in the university is unjustified.

: Would you prefer to be at home?

C: Even though my particular ethnic group calls for it, at this point in my life remaining at home doesn't particularly attract me. I'm from Puerto Rico and in Puerto Rico I was basically taught that a woman's place was in the home. However, today things are changing. I think Latin women are capable of being both housewives and career women. But it has been my choice to remain unmarried. The total freedom I have is very suitable for the work I do. I'm quite happy with the way my life is now. But I would like to say something to other women. It doesn't matter what a woman does as long as she is happy and content with what she is doing.

For example, women find joy in dedicating their life to raising their children. Mothers have begun to actively involve themselves in every aspect of their children's activities. Mothers who do get involved find that they are capable of bringing about a positive change. I admire them for that.

: I think that today it's necessary for the hispanic woman to participate in all aspects which affect her life or her children's life. We need more women who are willing to become involved in political affairs in order to protect the rights of the hispanic community. As it now stands, the hispanic woman here has not left her house and has not participated in the affairs of the community. I'm not suggesting that she should leave her house at seven o'clock in the morning and return at six o'clock at night. But she can do something during the hours when her children attend school.

S: Two hispanic women have currently organized a group of hispanic parents and called themselves "Comitée de los Padres." They are primarily interested in attempting to solve the needs of hispanic school-age children in Boston. It appears as if this is a first step in achieving maximum participation by women in the hispanic community.

: Changing the subject, do you feel that a woman should remain at home after she marries?

E: I think a woman should stay at home after she marries only if she chooses to stay at home. She should have the freedom to decide what she wants to do with her own life.

: If she chooses to work, who would take care of the children?

E: The children could be cared for by any number of the day care centers we have in this state. In this way, the woman could combine the two roles of motherhood and careerhood. Another solution is for the parents to share the child-care duties. While one parent works, the other could watch the children. And vice versa.

: In reality, this situation isn't solely a problem to hispanic women. American women also face the same dilemma. Generally, we have all been raised with the idea that it's the woman's function to care for the children and remain at home with them. Now we are faced with the problem of more women working. What should a family do if both the mother and father have equally important jobs. Who's going to take care of the kids? Who's going to remain at home if the working hours are the same for both parents?

E: I believe that if both parents want to maintain their jobs, a solution can be found. As I said before, the parents can put the children in a day care center or they can hire a babysitter. It's interesting to note that there is no word in Spanish for "babysitter." The woman has always been regarded as the one who cares for her children.

: Something interesting which I have observed is how unfair it is for a man to be gone from the house all day long. When I am home with my children I really enjoy being with them. Men lose out on this pleasure because most are at work all day. But when both parents are working and sharing the babysitting responsibilities, men have the opportunity to enjoy watching their children grow. I say men should enjoy fatherhood more the way women enjoy motherhood.

S: Many couples who are marrying today are deciding not to have children. You're married, Evelyn. What are your views on the subject?

E: Right now we have decided not to have children because we have just begun with our respective careers. But in the future we plan to have a family. Perhaps then my situation will change. Women are in a state of transition. And I believe it's a good situation for women because so many more opportunities are opening up for us. We are not limited to either/or choices.

: How can women make their conditions better?

E: A woman should realize that she is a complete entity in society--separate and distinguished from men. She should want to be herself. Women have never learned to be or appreciate themselves. She should be able to look at herself in the mirror and say, "I like you." Perhaps, this may be a little egotistical. But I feel she should be proud of who she is and what she is doing.

Oral Testimony with respect to Caribbean Folk Religions

A: Among the religious cults brought by Africans to the Caribbean is Santerismo. Santerismo made its way into Puerto Rico and Cuba via the slave trade. All of our gods and saints are African. Among the various symbols in our religion are the symbol of adoration and the symbol of the river, which are the two dominant symbols.

My personal experience with Santerismo is rather complex in the sense that, for me, religion means penitence and interior austerity. The greatest god of the saints is Opatala--the God dressed in white. He is the God of Justice. All of our gods take care of us, protect us, keep us healthy, tranquil and happy. When a santero becomes ill, his friends will pray to one of the gods to make him well. If the God who has helped is Cotun--the God who dwells in the river--a group of worshippers will pay homage to her by singing to the water in adoration. The gods do not expect thanks for their aid but we thank them anyway in the form of prayer. Cotun is like the queen of the river, the possessor of the amber, the lady of the scarab and the coral, mistress of the peacocks and the god of many beautiful things on earth. Looking toward the river, we look for a stone which is similar to the "ortaz". We fish for sole because in our ceremony to Cotun, the sole must be eaten first. The sole represents Cotun. The sole must be eaten before any other fish or any other saint, in figurative terms, because she represents the saint who opens all roads. After eating the sole, we walk toward the river to begin our ceremony of Ochun--the God who communicates with the poor of this world. We make offerings to our saints because they come from the agricultural zones where the earth is cultivated. We give thanks to them for the plentiful food the earth has produced because of their intervention. The ceremony is like a fiesta. The celebrants beat drums, ring bells, dance and sing to Ochun. We have a different song and a different dance for each of our saints.

Host: When did you introduce the religious phenomenon "Santerismo" to the people in Boston?

A: In May, 1972, Bill, Sabú, and I opened a "Botánica" in which we introduced Santerismo to Boston. Since that time our mission has been to make people aware of what Santerismo is by going into the streets and meeting and talking to as many people as well as listening.

Host: Have you met with any resistance in your efforts to talk to people about Santerismo?

A: We've met with many people who do not share our beliefs about our religion. But that doesn't matter. We will continue to talk to people and offer our assistance to those who want it.

Host: Bill, I'm aware that you spend the majority of your life devoted to your religious work. Why do you continue with this work instead of choosing a business career which would be more productive in terms of income and which would involve less work and fewer hours?

B: Speaking frankly, I have had many offers to go into the field of business but I feel my calling is to dedicate my life to my religion. Santerismo is a way of life. It is more than a religion. It's a lifestyle, our own culture. I feel my mission here in Boston is to share my religion and my way of life with others. Throughout the centuries my people have fought to keep our culture, our religion, alive. From Africa, where my people were brought to Cuba as slaves, we struggled to maintain our way of life. Santerismo was carried from our homeland not only to Cuba but found its expression in the rest of the Caribbean and was particularly popular in the Lesser Antilles. Our ancestors struggled to keep our religion alive and we struggle today to keep it alive because we feel it is worth our efforts. We feel that as a result of our work in Boston we have truly helped the community. Through the power of God we have been able to cure ailments which doctors and scientists could not cure. For reasons such as these, we feel it is important to continue our work.

Host: Do you need a license to practice in Boston?

B: In order for us to lend our services to the community, we need a license.

Host: Do you intend to dedicate your life to Santerismo also, Sabú?

S: I would love to dedicate my life to my work with all my heart and soul. I express my love for my religion through dance and at all our ceremonies I perform. But, as you know, in order to live, one must work so that bills can be paid and food can be bought, etc. So aside from my involvement with Santerismo I work as a dietitian's assistant in a local Boston hospital.

Host: When did you become aware that you possessed extraordinary powers?

S: When I was ten I realized that I could do things that most ten-year-olds could not do. I felt that God was calling on me to continue his work on earth. When I began to cure ill people, I understood that I possessed supernatural powers.

Host: What is your function at religious ceremonies?

S: I express myself in a form of dance called Afro-Antillano. At our ceremonies I perform for our Gods.

Host: Where did you learn to dance?

S: In Santo Domingo.

Host: In most of your religious ceremonies you place fruit on an altar. Can you explain the significance of the fruit?

B: The fruits are used to adorn the statues of our saints. In a sense, we are thanking them for the plentiful harvests we have had. Toward the end of the celebration the fruit is taken from the saints and shared among the celebrants. This gesture is a symbol of the unity of our people.

Host: Who are the saints you adorn with fruit?

B: In Santerismo there are seven powers who are the seven principal saints which we worship.

Oral Testimony of Three Hispanic Fathers on the Issue of Fatherhood

Host: Don Pedro, could you tell us a little about yourself?

Don Pedro: I was born in Manatí, in El Barrio Cortez in 1896. I originally came to the United States to visit my daughter. Her husband had sent me a letter saying that she was ill. When I set out for the United States I had no intention of remaining, but I wanted to be near my daughter. Our future plans were indefinite. We didn't know if we'd make our home in the United States or if we'd eventually return to Puerto Rico. But I was comfortable being close to my family again. I believe that parents and children should remain close together. The children should help support their parents when they grow older. Parents shouldn't be left alone. I feel it's dangerous for a family to be separated because the love and affection that once existed between parents and children may be lost. There ought to be a friendship and a family unity which contributes to the tranquility of the family.

When I was brought up my elders were very strict--too strict. I didn't believe in raising my children as firmly. I was an orphan and was treated very poorly and I was always being hit. But I respected other people, and they, in turn, treated me well. Kids today are brought up by more educated, more understanding parents. They're not treated as brutally. In my days, children were afraid of their parents. But today it's good to be friends with your children.

When I was first married, a quarter was worth a dollar. Anyone who made a quarter was lucky. I earned sixty cents a day cutting sugar cane. The day was long--I wouldn't return home until 8 o'clock at night. But I wanted to support my family. I wanted to bring home food to my children. It was a good feeling to earn money and support my family. I felt honest and proud.

We used to live in a little house on the outskirts of the city. One day the owner of the house was removing rocks caught in the upper story of the house. I told him to be careful because a falling rock is dangerous. He told me not to worry. I had to leave for work in town repairing a teacher's clock. I was still worried about the rocks and rushed to finish my work to return home. In the middle of work I decided to run home and check up. Everything was fine, so I returned to work. I can remember walking along the road after work. I was a new road. When I approached my house I noticed a group of people in front. I feared something had happened. A rock had fallen through my ceiling and hit my son's head.

There he was, with his head crushed.

That was one of the most difficult a terrible sufferings I have ever had to endure. It was too much for any man--to see a son die like that. I suffered tremendously. It's horrible to have to see a little Angel of God who did no harm to anyone, killed like that. I don't want to have to remember that. My wife doesn't like to be reminded of it either.

I had to get used to the idea. Because it was God's wish that my son should die. We went ahead. I lost my won. I suffered. I buried him. But we went ahead--fighting, struggling to get by in life. I have four sons here. They are away from home now, but whwerever I am, they'll be there.

I got married when I was twenty-five years old. I had sensed that every day more and more it was getting to be an obligation to get out and work, and to get married. My old lady said to me, "Look, you know that when you're married you have to support your wife and children. You can't expect me to go on taking care of you, do you?" She said to me that the mother hen raises the chick until he gets older; then she pecks at him so that he'll go out and work. You know, animals can sometimes raise their young better than people do!

Don Carlos: I used to live with my family in peace, until one day my wife took my children and left. I suffered a lot. I went looking for them. They wouldn't let me see them so I returned. They were in New York, living near her parents. I felt awful. I had to return to Puerto Rico so that they would listen to me and allow me to see them. But it was only for five minutes. Then I came back to Boston. A long time went by and I didn't hear anything else. I always wondered about them--where could they be and what are they doing? Are they all right? Are they suffering? I began to think about a lot of things. I had great pain thinking that my children were not near to me. So I decided to resign myself to not seeing them until I could learn something positive about them.

One day, the mother of my children wrote a letter to my sister letting us know how the children were. She gave us the telephone number. So I called them and suddenly I heard the voice of my child, my eldest son, Carlitos, shouting with joy, "Papi! Papi! Papi!" I was so, so happy--filled with happiness--my heart leapt with joy! Carlitos gave the phone to the other children to speak. A week later I went to see them and when I did, and when they saw me, they jumped all over me, hugging me. And they said, "Daddy, will you stay here with us?" I said no, that I had to return.

I used to go and see them every once in a while in Holyoke, where they were living. One day I asked her if I could take them for a while during the vacation. She said yes. When I went to pick them up, she all of a sudden said, "You can take them with you--indefinitely!" So I was even more excited! I would have them always at my side! I brought them home. I now thank God, since I am the luckiest man on earth. I have my children by my side. I love them and they love me. I try to do the best for them. I want them to respect others, love their neighbors. I want to bring them up well and in the same way that my father educated me, so that no one speaks ill of them. That's how I want it to be, so that no one says they're bad kids or criticizes them. I want them to have what I had.

Amaris is seven. She's in the first grade at the Tobin. Carlitos is nine, and in the third grade there. Daniel is in Kindergarten. It is hard sometimes to have to discipline them, because every once in a while you have to lay down the law so that they will have respect. Hitting children all the time will not teach them to be good. You must give them affection, hug and kiss them, take them out to play, take them to parks, to have fun, not let them become bored, dull, but have them be alive and happy.

My wife loves them very much and takes good care of them as if they were her own. I take them to the park and I just bought Carlitos a new bike and I take them to play every day so that they'll be spirited, fresh and lively.

Puerto Rico is different. There's a lot of danger here in the United States--drugs, delinquency, cigarettes. I want my children to grow up in a way that they're not sorry in the future for what they do. I feel that an education is very important. I sacrifice all that I have so that I can buy things for them, clothes--each one--so that they'll be decent. Not like rich kids, you understand--poorly but decently, so that no one can say that the children of Carlos are juvenile delinquents. No. No one is happier than I! Even if I had millions of dollars I couldn't be any happier without having my children by my side. I have my children--and that's the greatest wealth in the whole world!

Don Julio: When my wife told me that she was pregnant, that was the happiest day of my life. It was the day I had been waiting for. Everyday after that when I went to work, I would buy a little something for the baby, but I would always buy the wrong size. It was always too big, so that the baby was still wearing the things a year and a half later. I hoped it would be a little girl, so that we would have our own little doll and be able to dress her and treat her like one. We would give her the affection, the education, the upbringing, the happiness and everything a parent can give to a child. That is what a child needs. That is what my parents gave to me.

My daughters are eight and ten years old today and I give them all that I can. Ballet, skating, a boat, swimming. I take them fishing all the time. The sacrifices of a father are first of all to take care of his home, give his children the affection--the well-being--all that they deserve, to look for the best for them. I work hard for them, to be able to give them what they ask. If they asked me for a piece of the sky, I would give them a piece of the sky. I am a poor man, a working man. Often I give them more than they ask. The way I was educated, I give to the kids, and I'd like to continue that until they are old and never stop caring for them. I would like to be able to be always with my children, not like the Americans. Even with their schoolwork, I help my daughters. I almost wish that they could stay by my side forever.

You don't have children just for its own sake, but rather as the best way to share with others. In order to be a friend, a companion, to show true Christianity, to share the best part of your life, neither spoiling them, but trying to make them happy girls.

In the role of parent, my wife helps me one-hundred percent. I call her "my littlest girl," but actually she supports all of my work. She helps me. I would like to make of my children two strong women who are not sorry for anything that they have done in life, but rather who are proud of what they are, and I proud of them.

After doing their schoolwork, I like to take them out to play, jump rope, whatever they prefer. Everything--I want to share everything with them. I share more with my daughters than with my wife it seems. But they are two girls who were born with love, with an extraordinary love towards their parents. Since they were small, they've been taught to love and respect others. I share their happiness.

In the future they are going to be thankful for all of the sacrifices. It will have been worthwhile. I hope for them that they do well, finish college, that they will help me out, too.